SPECIAL COLLECTOR'S ISSUE

GUITAR WORLD

GUITAR & BASS TRANSCRIPTIONS

ERIC CLAPTON
BAD LOVE

ERIC GALES
(WITH JOE BONAMASSA)
I WANT MY CROWN

THIN LIZZY
JAILBREAK

REVIEWED!
JACKSON'S NEW AMERICAN SERIES VIRTUOSO

THE ULTIMATE CLAPTON TRIBUTE

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SLOWHAND IN THE '60s, '70s & '80s

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STIFF LITTLE FINGERS
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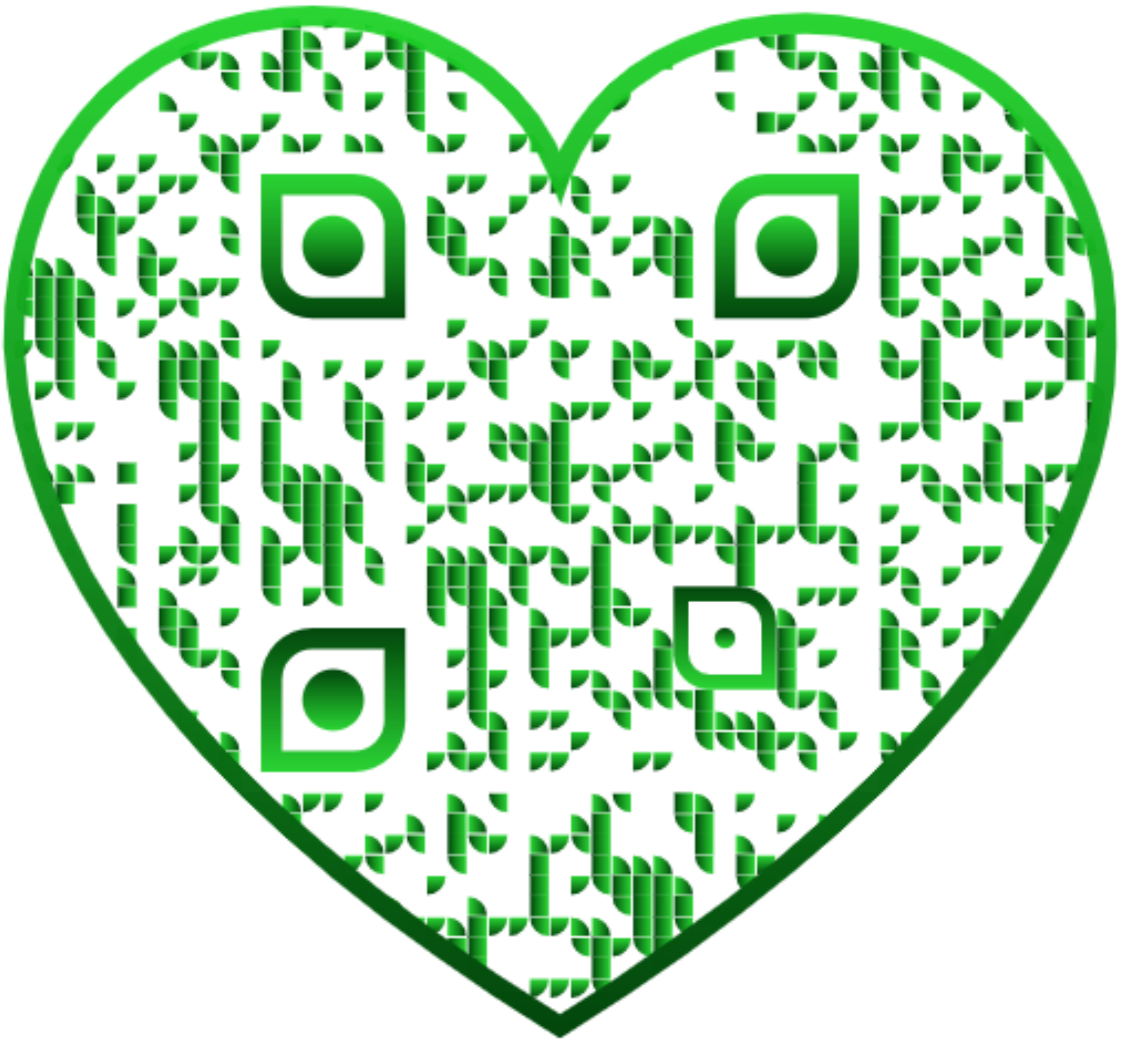

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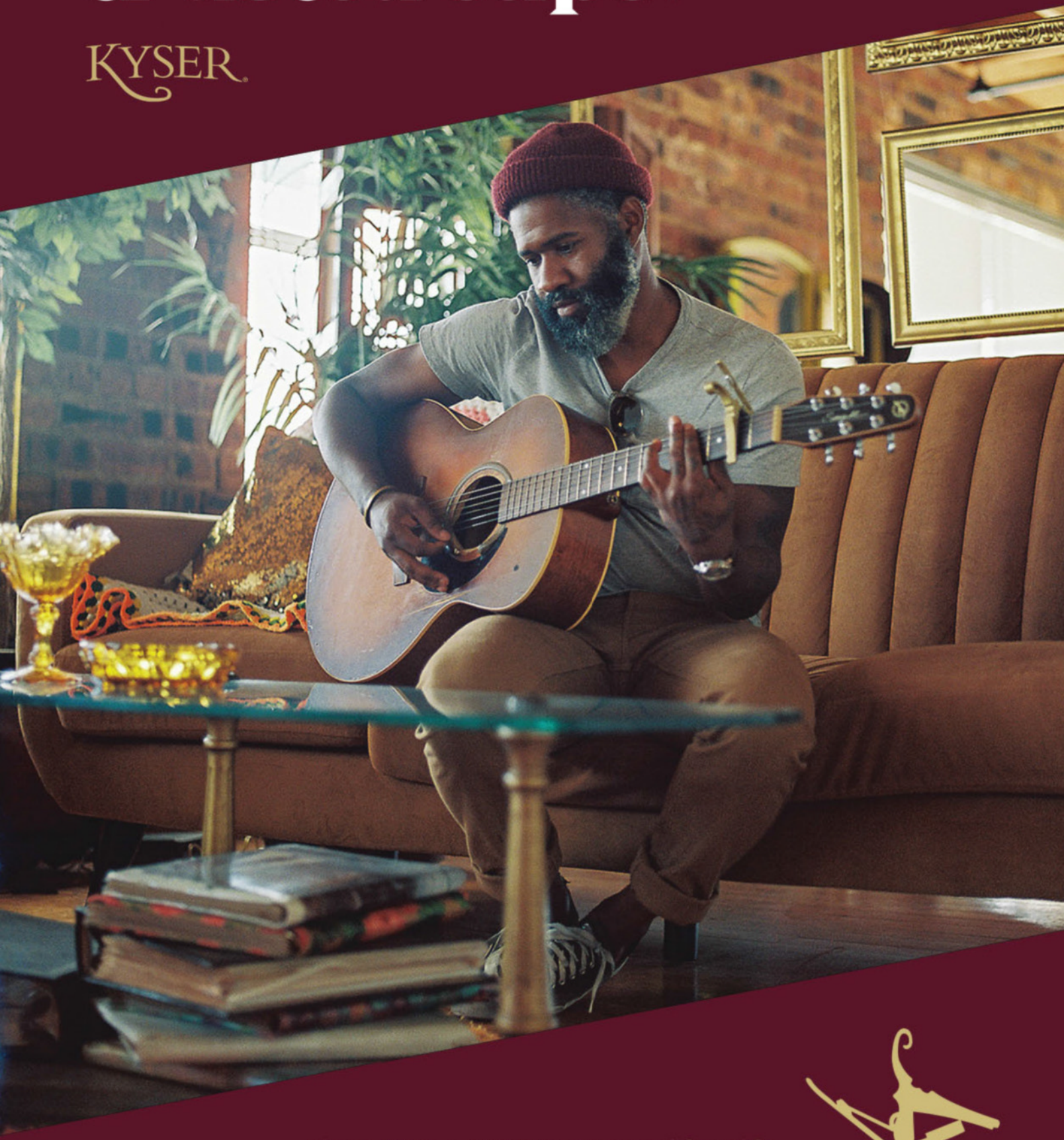

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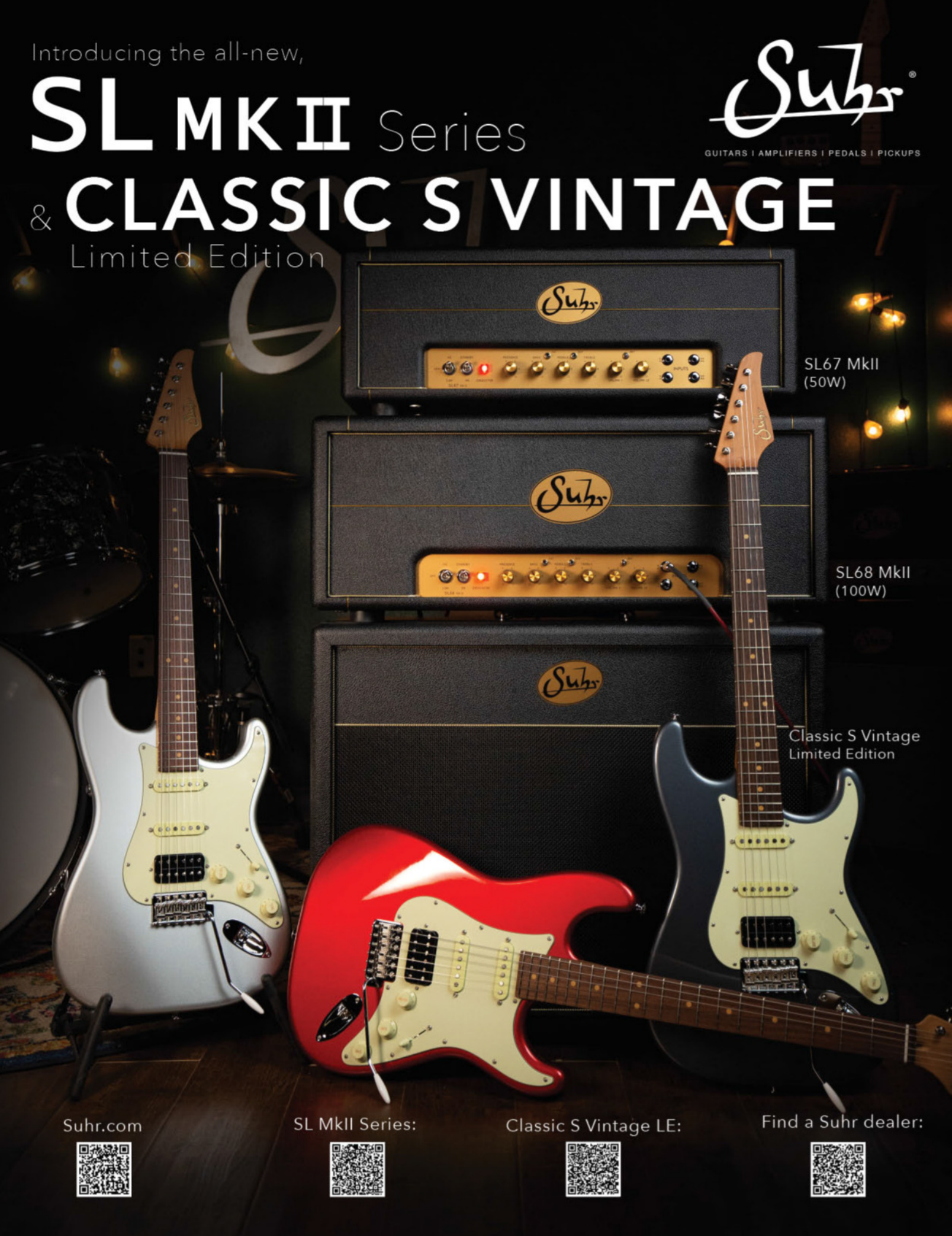

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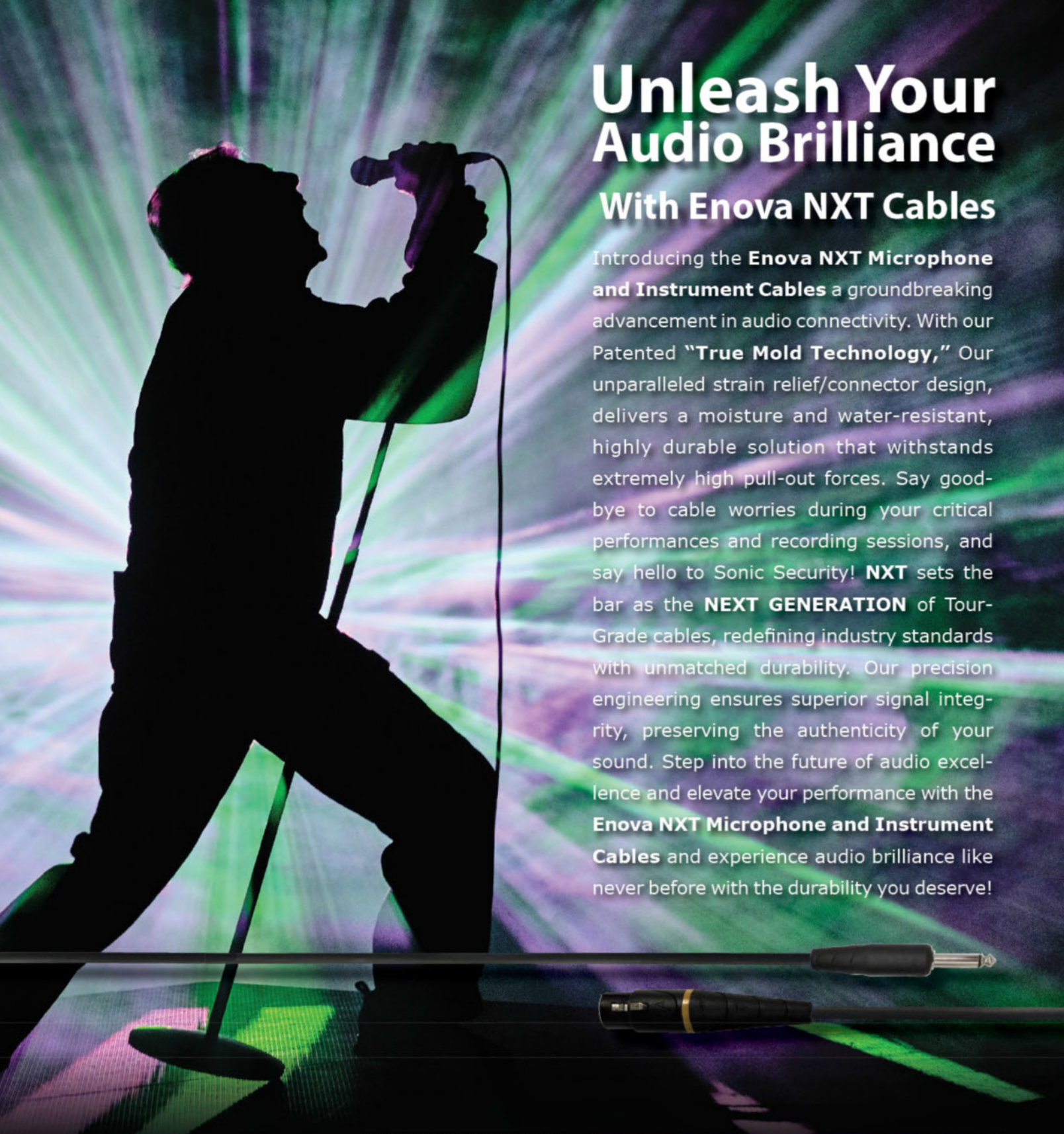

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WOODSHED

VOL. 45 | NO. 2 | FEBRUARY 2024

A PRICEY "FOOL"

HOW FITTING IS it that, during the final days of putting this issue together, Eric Clapton's famed 1964 Gibson SG Standard — better known as "The Fool" — sold for $1.27 million? That figure makes it not only the most expensive Clapton guitar ever sold at auction (remember that Blackie sold for a tidy sum a few years back), but also one of the most expensive guitars sold at auction — ever. It should come as no surprise that the buyer was one of the world's most renowned vintage guitar collectors, businessman and Indianapolis Colts owner Jim Irsay. How nice for him! Anyway, speaking of E.C., it's a shame we weren't able to interview him (or George Terry) for this issue (I believe our latest Clapton interview — written by yours truly — appeared in our July 2016 issue). Here's hoping he'll take part in the next one. That said, I do love the cast of Clapton characters we've assembled for this issue, including Phil Palmer, Albert Lee, Chuck Kirkpatrick, Albhy Galuten and more.

SPEAKING OF IMPRESSIVE NUMBERS: Happy 190th birthday to Martin Guitar! Here's a pic of me, Paul Riario and Alan Chaput (plus *Guitar Player's* Chris Scapelliti) with the Martin gang at 196 Hudson St. in NYC, the site of their first factory way back in 1833 (when I was still struggling to play an F chord). — ***Damian Fanelli***

COURTESY OF MARTIN GUITAR (GROUP) CLAUDIA SCHMIDT (PEDAL)

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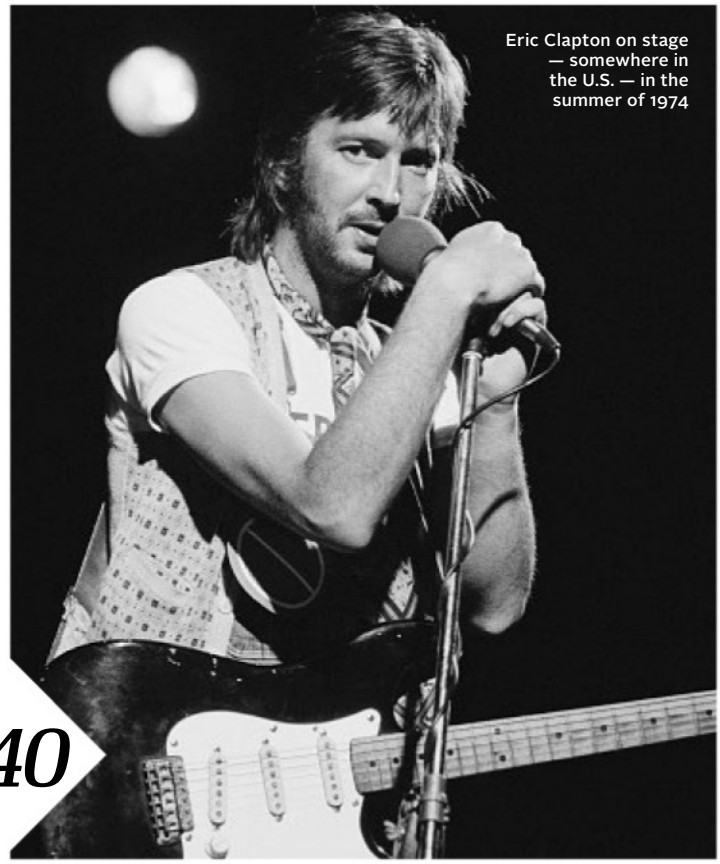
GW explores the first three decades of Eric Clapton's storied career — from *Five Live Yardbirds* through the sleepy *There's One in Every Crowd* years to one of this issue's transcribed songs, 1989's "Bad Love." Featuring new interviews with the people who were there, including Albert Lee, Phil Palmer, Steve Lukather, Albhy Galuten, Chuck Kirkpatrick, Eddie Kramer and Danny Flowers, plus Joe Bonamassa, Martin Barre and Peter Frampton



Eric Clapton on stage — somewhere in the U.S. — in the summer of 1974

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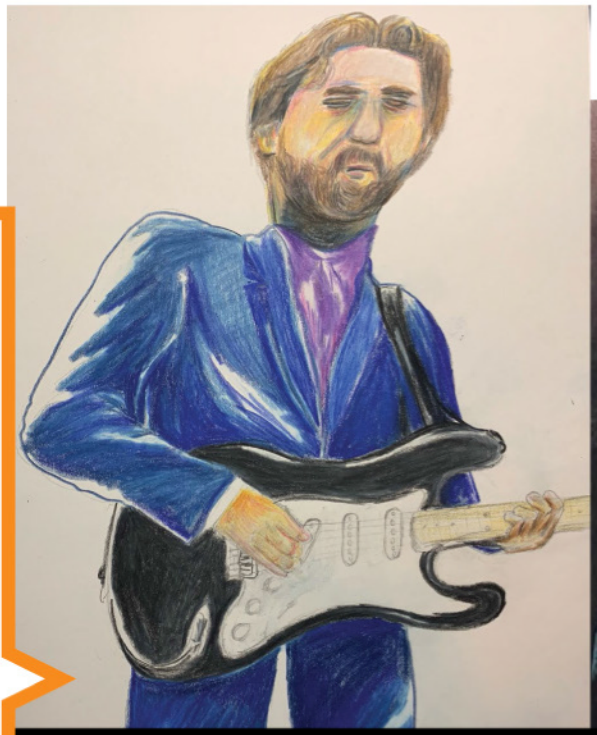
READER ART

OF THE MONTH

If you've created a drawing, painting or sketch of your favorite guitarist and would like to see it in an upcoming issue of *Guitar World*, email **GWSoundingBoard@futurenet.com** with a JPG or PDF of the image!

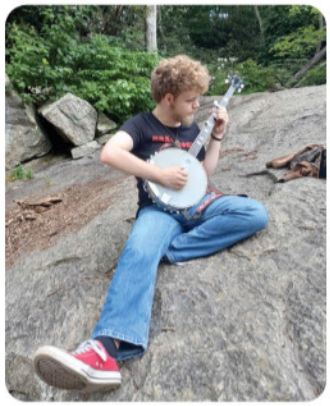
And obviously, include your name!



ERIC CLAPTON BY ERIC ROSALE

STEVIE RAY VAUGHAN BY LANCE GEBHARDT

DEFENDERS *of the Faith*



Cassius "Banjo" Pritchett

AGE: 17
GUITARS: D'Angelico Premier Bedford, Dixon 5-string banjo, Squire Bullet Mustang
SONGS I'VE BEEN PLAYING: Rob Zombie "House of 1000 Corpses," Louis Armstrong "La Vie En Rose"
GEAR I WANT MOST: Jackson x Series sl4x Soloist, Leslie speaker

John Robinson

AGE: 66
GUITARS: PRS SE Custom 22 semi-hollowbody, Gretsch 5420T, Fender Ultra Telecaster, Fender 75th Anniversary Strat, Rickenbacker 360/12, Epiphone IBG ES-339, 175th Anniversary Martin D-35, Gretsch Parlor Penguin
SONGS I'VE BEEN PLAYING: Originals and original arrangements of classic covers in multiple genres
GEAR I WANT MOST: Gretsch White Falcon, Fender Vibroverb

Dennis Bradley

AGE: 51
HOMETOWN: Colorado Springs, CO
GUITARS: Ernie Ball Music Man 20th Anniversary JP6, ESP USA M-II NTB FR, ESP USA M-III FR, Jackson Jeff Loomis Kelly Signature, PRS Mark Tremonti Signature, Taylor 6- and 12-strings and many more
SONGS I'VE BEEN PLAYING: Classic rock hits from the 1960s to the 1990s with my cover band, Mimic; and anything by Iron Maiden, Dio and Ozzy (with Randy Rhoads)
GEAR I WANT MOST: ESP USA M-II NTB FR in the "blood splatter" finish

Are you a Defender of the Faith? Send a photo, along with your answers to the questions above, to **GWSoundingBoard@futurenet.com**. And pray!

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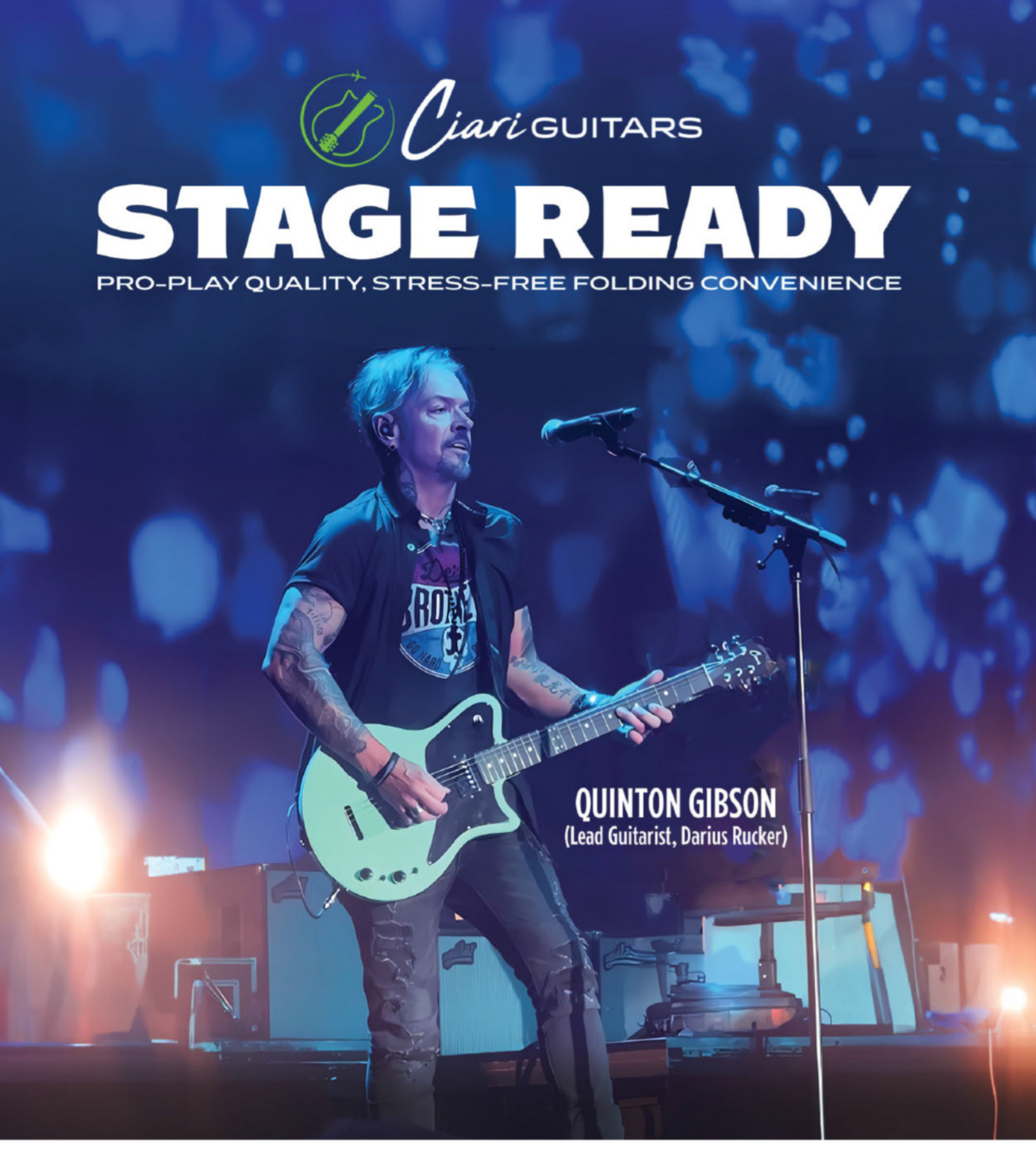

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Brent Mason — with his ubiquitous primer gray Fender Tele — performs at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum in Nashville, October 22, 2017

PHOTO BY TERRY WYATT/GETTY IMAGES

The Gray Ghost

SESSION ACE BRENT MASON EXPLAINS WHY — AND HOW — HE OCCASIONALLY TRIES TO SOUND LIKE SOMEONE OTHER THAN BRENT MASON

By Andrew Daly

AFTER REPORTEDLY PLAYING on over a thousand records, Brent Mason has gotten his sound dialed in. And it's a good thing, as he's a session man who relies on reliability. But that's not all Mason strives for when he enters his "office."

"There are times when I try hard not to sound like me," he says. "I end up in so many different types of situations, and I really do need to be a chameleon. I straddle the line between retaining what I do and not wanting to always sound like Brent Mason."

That's a tall order, considering Mason has made a career of sounding distinctly like himself across records bearing the names of artists like George Strait, Alan Jackson, Shania Twain, Zac Brown and dozens more.

"Sometimes I'll put the Telecaster down," he says, "And I'll grab a Gretsch, ES-335 or even a Les Paul. I intentionally won't grab the Tele, and that'll inspire me to play a lick I might not have thought of if I did. I like to grab a guitar that will inspire me to play something differently. But even that's based on the artist. If it's George Strait, it's the Tele. But if it's more R&B-sounding, I may go for the ES-335."

If you're privy to Mason's chicken-pickin' ways, said Tele should be familiar. But if you're just logging on, the story of how he acquired his primer gray '67 Fender Tele should be interesting.

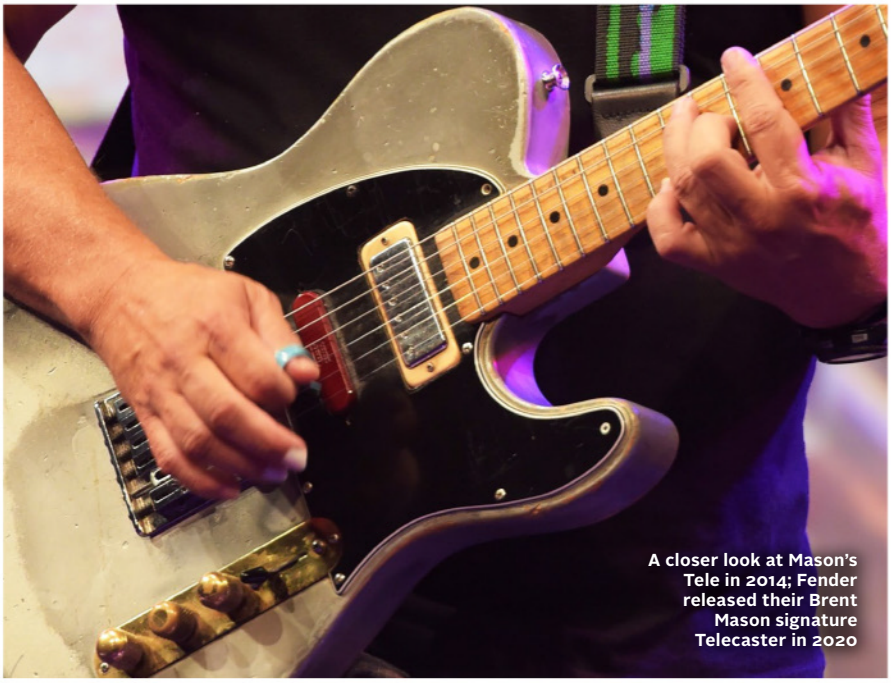
Mason instantly perks up when asked about the guitar: "I knew it was special, but not right away," he says. "I original-

"I straddle the line between retaining what I do and not wanting to always sound like Brent Mason"

ly grabbed another Tele when I went into the store that day with Don Kelley [*Nashville bandleader known for his lengthy residency at Robert's Western World*]; it was Don who bought the gray one, and I grabbed a mustard-colored one. And that evening, we were playing a club, and I grabbed Don's gray one and immediately said, 'Man, I wish I'd bought this one.'

"Luckily," Mason says, "Don was known for trading guitars, so I traded him the mustard-colored one for the primer gray one. There's just something about the sound of that guitar; I think it's the swamp ash, which is kinda perforated. It must have been floating around in some swamp water, and when they dried it out, it gave it a certain acoustic quality that's fatter sounding with extra thump."

Tele in hand, Mason established himself as a premier session player within the Nashville circuit. And sure, he's had his solo moments, with *Hot Wired* (1997) checking in as one for the books — especially if you were the type who spent their childhood enamored with twangy instrumental country music in an era when boy bands reigned supreme. Still, the solo life never appealed to Brent Mason; no, it's long been the session life for him.



A closer look at Mason's Tele in 2014; Fender released their Brent Mason signature Telecaster in 2020

"Session players don't get the credit they deserve," he says. "You've gotta be able to turn on a dime. But there's a real gray area about how sessions are credited, and some of the signature licks session players come up with are ones people won't know they wrote. You can try and formulate a lawsuit, but that will be the last session you ever do."

And when asked what the secret to making it as a session player is, Mason says: "It's not about you," he says. "You're there to support the record. Sometimes, it's doing something profound; other times, it's doing the obvious. But most of all, It's about maintaining the element of surprise while giving them what they want; meaning, when it's time to grab that Tele and sound like Brent Mason, I do that. Being able to make those decisions might just be what lengthens your career."

INTRODUCING

CRYMWAV

24/7 (Electric Pudding Records)

SOUND: Comprising former Smash Fashion singer/guitarist Roger Deering and shredmeister Lloyd Stuart Casson, the LA-based hard rockers channel the furious fire of Motörhead and UFO, cut through with the melodic sensibilities of Cheap Trick. With darker sounds than their previous band, every track sounds like an instant stadium-filling anthem.

KEY TRACK "American Carnage"

The Gems

Phoenix (Napalm Records)

SOUND: Formed from the ashes of Thundermother, these Swedes deliver hard-hitting, take-no-prisoners, old-school rock and metal while displaying influences ranging from Zep to Maiden. Guitarist Mona Lindgren nails the rolling, riff-laden essence of classic Jimmy Page, displaying taste and flair in equal measure, peeling off blistering, blues-fired licks with careless aplomb.

KEY TRACK: "Send Me to the Wolves"

Grave Secrets

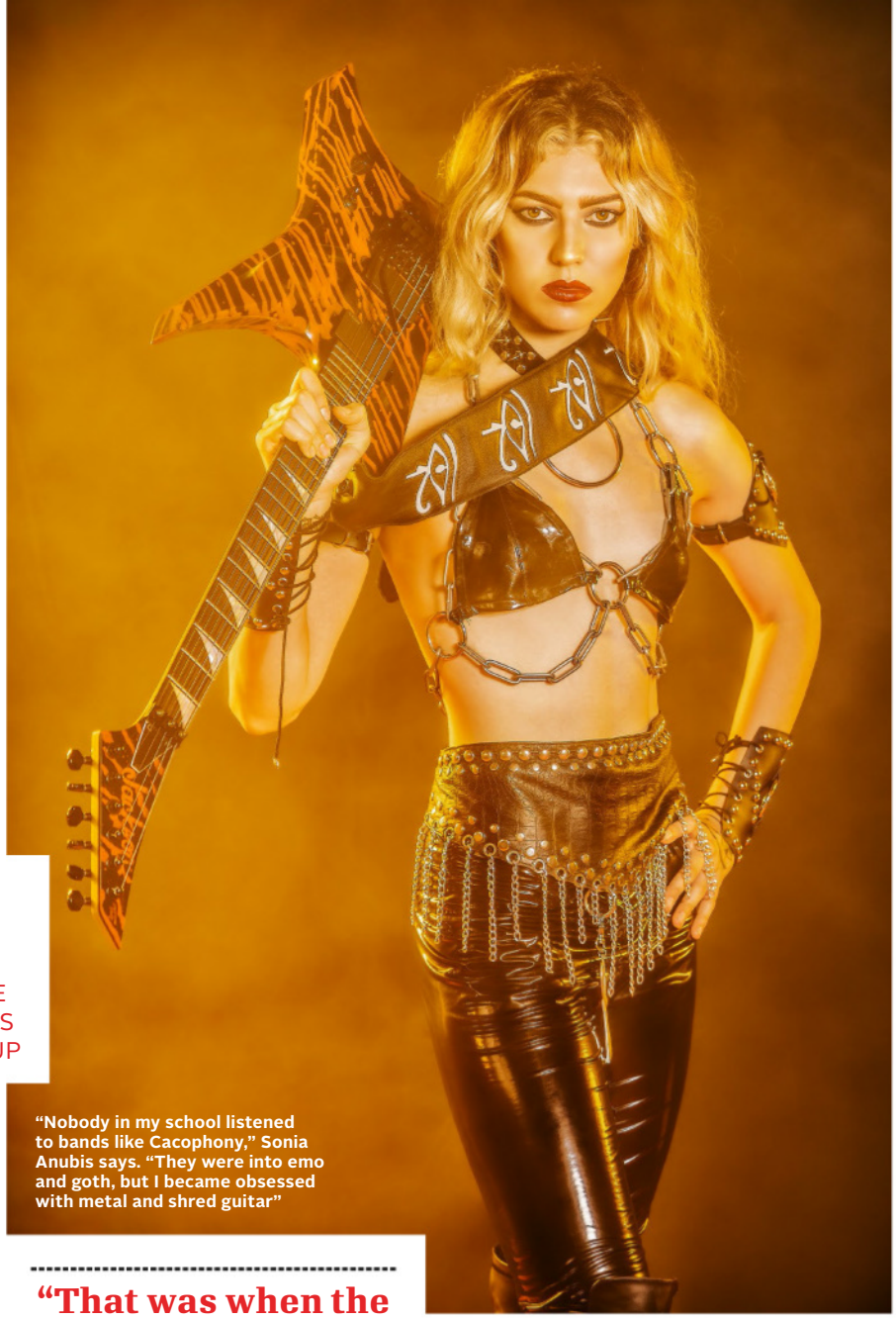
Till Your Lungs Fall Out (Wiretap Records)

SOUND: LA's Grave Secrets combine elements of punk, hardcore, emo and powerpop. Thoughtful, melodic guitar lines and riffs interweave, setting up a backdrop for punchy, incisive solo work. A handful of chugging, mid-paced tracks demonstrate the band's ability to move beyond the restrictive confines of genre pigeonholing.

KEY TRACK: "Drugs"

— Mark McStea

RICK DIAMOND/GETTY IMAGES FOR NAMM (MASON) INTRODUCING (FROM LEFT): KERRY DONOVAN, MIKAEL HALTÉN, PROVIDED/PR



"Nobody in my school listened to bands like Cacophony," Sonia Anubis says. "They were into emo and goth, but I became obsessed with metal and shred guitar"

Cobra Spell

FOR SONIA ANUBIS AND HER NETHERLANDS-BASED, ALL-FEMALE BAND, IT'S ALL ABOUT THE EIGHTIES — AND THEIR FANS ARE EATING IT UP

By Joe Bosso

IF 24-YEAR-old Dutch guitarist Sonia Anubis could click her heels and magically transport herself to another time and place, she would wing herself to the late 1980s and land smack dab on the L.A. Sunset Strip. "I would fit right in — I just know it," she says. "That was when the coolest music came out, in my opinion. Ratt, Dokken, W.A.S.P., L.A. Guns, Great White. They were such great bands, and they made records that are timeless."

Anubis channels her passion for Eighties glam metal in her band Cobra Spell. Formed in 2019, the Netherlands-based, all-female outfit specializes in original tunes that recall the golden days of big hair, pointy guitars, leather, sex and sleaze. "It's kind of funny that I'm so nostalgic about a period that existed before I was born," she says. "But I see lots of people my age who come to our shows, and they feel the same way. Good music is just good music."

"That was when the coolest music came out. Ratt, Dokken, L.A. Guns, Great White. They were such great bands, and they made records that are timeless"

As a teenager, Anubis started out on the bass and taught herself Gene Simmons' parts on Kiss records, but after she heard the twin-guitar heroics of Jason Becker and Marty Friedman, she moved up to six strings and never looked back. "Nobody in my school listened to bands like Cacophony," she says. "They were into emo and goth, but I became obsessed with metal and shred guitar. The harmonies were so beautiful to me."

Thus far, Cobra Spell have released two EPs, *Love Venom* and *Anthems of the Night*, and they're finishing their debut album, *666*. The band has played throughout Europe and has amassed a sizable following in Germany. "That's the Valhalla for our kind of music," Anubis says. "The Netherlands, not so much." Touring the U.S. is high on her wish list, and she's hoping *666* will create a demand for the band in the States.

"We need to play in America," she says. "We have fans there already — people buy our merch — but people really have to see us play. I just know that we'll go down well there, particularly in California. That's where so much of this music started, and we want to bring it back."

AXOLOGY

- **GUITARS** Jackson Custom Shop WR1 Warrior, Jackson Raven Warrior
- **AMPS** EVH 5150
- **EFFECTS** BOSS GT-1000 Guitar Effects Processor

RAQUEL GARCIA

DieHumane

FORMER EXODUS GUITARIST RICK HUNOLT RE-EMERGES — SHARP AS EVER — ON *THE GROTESQUE*, A GENRE-MELDING METAL MASTERPIECE

By Jon Wiederhorn

Former Exodus guitarist Rick Hunolt with his signature Siggi-Braun RH-2

BETWEEN 1983 AND 2005, Rick Hunolt played on six full-length Exodus studio albums and regularly toured with the top-tier thrash band. However, during a period of intense personal turmoil in 2006, Hunolt was replaced by Heathen guitarist Lee Altus, and aside from a couple of guest appearances, he remained largely MIA for 15 years.

"Once you've been in one of the best thrash bands in the world, it's pretty hard to figure out what to do next," Hunolt says.

Then in 2021, Hunolt's childhood friend, Skinlab vocalist Steve Esquivel, referred the guitarist to a melodic, cinematic Texas band called DieHumane that was looking for a lead guitarist. Hunolt received rough demos of two songs and couldn't stop listening to them.

"I was blown away by the big choruses, strong melodies and spacious arrangements," Hunolt says. "I thought, 'Man, I could see myself playing to this.' It's a big change, but if I'm gonna do something outside of thrash, this is exactly what I want to do."

He contacted DieHumane's multi-instrumentalists, Joshua Vargas and Greg Hilligiest Jr., and convinced them to give him a shot. The result is *The Grotesque*, a multi-dimensional escapade that blends industrial textures, percussive guitar riffs in drop B and drop C, evocative guitar lines and atmospheric jazzy embellishments into a wide array of psych-metal soundscapes.

"If I'm gonna do something outside of thrash, this is exactly what I want to do"

"Stepping into the studio with DieHumane was a different experience because they leave so much space in the songs," Hunolt says. "It's not like Exodus where it's 95 percent crunching guitars. I had to really concentrate on not playing so many notes to create parts that worked with the emotion of the songs."

The Grotesque was half-finished when Hunolt joined the band, but with the help of Vargas, Hilligiest and veteran producer Ulrich Wild, Hunolt helped finish writing the tunes and added rhythmic flourishes, harmonies and solos.

"At first it wasn't easy," he says. "Everything I played had to go along with the peaks and valleys in the songs. But I found that when I shut my eyes and really listened to the song, I was able to get into the right headspace and everything clicked."

AXOLOGY

- **GUITAR** Siggi-Braun Signature RH-1 V
- **AMPS** Marshall 9200 stereo power amp and two EL34 cabinets
- **EFFECTS** Neural DSP Quad Cortex

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Steve Lynch performs in Irvine, California, August 15, 2015

SCOTT DUDELSON/GETTY IMAGES

Right-Hand Man

FORMER AUTOGRAPH GUITARIST STEVE LYNCH DISCUSSES THE ROOTS OF HIS TWO-HANDED TAPPING TECHNIQUE — AND, UM, WHAT VAN HALEN'S MANAGEMENT THOUGHT ABOUT IT...

By Andrew Daly

BY THE TIME Steve Lynch burst onto the scene with Autograph, he was nearly 30 — a relative dinosaur compared to some of the young bucks he was up against. But no matter, Lynch's style — which includes a dizzying array of arpeggios, triads and intervals — stood out from the pack.

Lynch was so slick that by the time Autograph's 1984 banger, *Sign In Please*, was released, his greatest foe was Eddie Van Halen, who happened to be Lynch's brother in two-handed tapping heroics.

"When our tour with Van Halen started, I was asked by their management, 'Are you Steve Lynch, the one who wrote *The Right Touch*' [*A 1982 instructional book with the full title* The Right Touch: The Art of Hammering Notes with the Right Hand]? I said, 'Yes, I am,'" Lynch says. "I was then aggressively informed, 'That's Eddie's technique; you're not allowed to play it on the tour — or else.' I was pissed that I couldn't play something I had created. So, later on, I confronted Eddie about it, to which he replied, 'I had no idea they put those restrictions on you. I'll call the dogs off.' I graciously thanked him and played whatever I wanted for the rest of the tour. I'll never know if he was telling the truth, but I don't care; we hit it off well after that."

While Autograph's time in the limelight was short, their influence remains. Sure,

they couldn't duplicate the breakneck success of "Turn Up the Radio," but that hasn't stopped Lynch from making it known that — greatest hits aside — Autograph mattered.

"We'd played in other bands before our Sunset Strip days, but Autograph was different," Lynch says. "We went from guys playing and rehearsing together for fun to opening for Van Halen. Suddenly we were driving across the U.S. in a dilapidated Winnebago to play in front of an 18,000-seat sold-out venue opening for the biggest band in the world, and we didn't even have a name yet. On that treacherous journey, we devised a name we could use... Autograph. Then RCA signed us to a three-album deal backstage at Madison Square Garden... who would have thought? Measuring our importance is hard, but we earned the right to be there."

Taking some time away from his ongoing solo work and potential plans for an Autograph reunion, Steve Lynch dialed in with *GW* to discuss his approach to the guitar, the recording of his finest solos and more.

Describe the early evolution of your style.

The spark was lit when the Beatles played on Ed Sullivan's show in 1964. My older sister had some of her cute girlfriends over to watch, and when I saw their reaction to the performance, I thought, "That's what I want to do!" And that's when I received an acoustic made of particle board from the Sears & Roebuck catalog, with strings so high off the neck you had to stand on them to make a note come out. My style evolved when I stopped listening to other guitarists and started listening to jazz, which guided me in an obscure direction. But when Autograph formed, I had to abandon my progressive side for a more commercially accepted style. It didn't bother me much, though... I had to pay the rent somehow. [*Laughs*]

What are the origins of your two-hand tapping technique?

I first saw Harvey Mandel playing around with it at a soundcheck at a club in downtown Seattle in the early Seventies. That's what first inspired me. Then I saw a local guy named Steve Buffington experimenting with it, which made me pursue it more. But Emmett Chapman, the inventor of the Stick, made me immerse myself in it. He did a clinic at GIT [*Guitar Institute of Technology, now Musicians Institute*], and I was awestruck by the sounds he created. I immediately began to train my hand and began writing the two-hand theory, including arpeggios, triads, chord inversions, scales, intervals and double-stops.

Did being well-versed in music theory aid in crafting solos?

I would have never been able to create the solos I did without my theory knowledge. But I didn't necessarily think about theory when creating them; it just happened. I've never created a solo with a guitar in my hands. I would have the band play a couple of bars with vocals before the solo, then play through the solo section, and then come back in with a couple of bars after the solo with vocals, all while I recorded it. Then I'd take that recording home and listen to it until I heard the solo unfold in my mind. I'd then built the solo part by part until I felt it was complete.

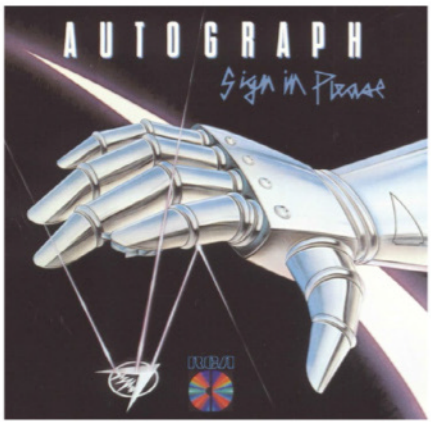
"I was then aggressively informed, 'That's Eddie Van Halen's technique; you're not allowed to play it on the tour — or else'"

Can you recount the recording of your "Turn Up the Radio" solo?

It took me five eight-hour days to create that solo. Whenever I thought I had it, I'd listen to it the next day and think it sucked. I knew the song could be a hit, so I wanted the perfect solo. At the end of that fifth day, I listened to the recording I'd done at home and realized I had it. I went into the studio the next day and laid it down. I played my custom-made Charvel through a mid-Sixties Marshall head and 4x12 cab with a little delay and reverb from the outboard gear. I doubled the solo, as I always do. On the first track, we ran the Studer two-inch analog machine at 101 percent speed to be slightly below pitch when played back at normal speed. We recorded at 99 percent on the second track, so it was slightly above pitch when played back. This gave the illusion there was a phaser or flanger applied.

What combination of amps, pedals and guitars are you using?

I'm not touring now, so I'm not using any particular amps, just my Headrush and Roland GR-55 guitar synth for recording. But I'm also looking into the latest version of Guitar Rig and AmpliTube for my home recordings. At the moment, I'm way too busy to tour, but that may very well change soon. My favorite guitars are the ones I had custom-made by Dale Roberts from



his shop in Jacksonville, Florida. They are perfect for my hands and sound the best for the two-handed technique, which requires a lot of output and sustain. I also use my Strats, Les Pauls and whatever others I have lying around.

Is it a challenge to create new music for a low-attention-span world?

There are no obstacles, with the internet and social media to promote your material worldwide and the convenience of recording from your home. You don't need a record contract; you can write and record with anyone at any time, anywhere. One slice of advice is to release singles one at a time and do your best on the writing, performance, arrangement and production for each. If you wish to complete a full collection of songs, that's fine, but most people never listen to the whole album.

Do you feel beholden to your past?

I don't feel obligated to do anything I've previously done because I've evolved musically. The past doesn't define who I am; I'm very grateful for the success I've had with Autograph and will always cherish those memories... and may again someday, but I'm just not reliant on it. Most musicians who genuinely love their craft feel the same. I'm completely comfortable where I am now because I think new adventures await everywhere.

What's next for you?

I'm still writing for my project, Blue Neptune, which will be a solo effort. I see it as a modern-day *The Dark Side of the Moon*, my favorite album. It will be singles. And there's potential for me to revisit a reformed Autograph. I never rule that out. But it would not be with the current lineup who are "performing as Autograph." It would be a fresh start with new personnel with a different perspective. Only time will tell. Other than that, I'm just a kid who, against all odds, dug out a name from the rubble. I am incredibly grateful for it, but I'm still that kid from Seattle who went to L.A. to follow a dream and found it.

LOST CLASSICS: Stiff Little Fingers

FRONTMAN/GUITARIST JAKE BURNS TAKES US BEHIND THE SCENES OF THE PUNK LEGENDS' CLASSIC 1979 ALBUM, *INFLAMMABLE MATERIAL*

By Mark McStea

***INFLAMMABLE MATERIAL*, THE** incendiary 1979 debut album from Northern Irish punks Stiff Little Fingers, is one of only a handful of truly essential albums from the era. Packed full of instant classics, it features many songs that still appear in the band's live set, including the anthemic "Alternative Ulster," plus "Suspect Device" and "Wasted Life."

We asked singer/guitarist Jake Burns — the only constant member of the band's lineup since their formation (although original bass player Ali McMordie is now back on board) — to give us the lowdown on how the album was made. It went a bit like this...

Did you have a lot of songs on hand when you went in to record *Inflammable Material*?

No, we literally went into the studio and recorded our live set. We didn't have anything else on hand at all except one song that we didn't like. The whole thing was done in 10 days — mostly live with just a couple of overdubs. We'd been playing the songs live for a while, so we were already really tight as a band. Geoff Travis and Mayo Thompson were officially "producing" the record, but they didn't know what they were doing in terms of production, really, and we certainly didn't. It was very much the blind leading the blind, but that made it very exciting. It was all about the quality of the songs. We didn't spend a lot of money getting a glossy production or anything. We didn't even use a tuner, so I'm guessing a lot of the songs probably aren't in concert pitch. We just tuned to whoever's guitar sounded most in tune. [*Laughs*] That's how green we were in the studio.

What was the writing process between you and Gordon Ogilvy, who co-wrote a number of key songs and was also your manager?

It's not the way it was painted in the media at the time, where they tried to imply that Gordon was some kind of Svengali figure, because he was a few years older than us. We just connected really well, and sometimes he'd have an idea that would spark a song, or maybe I'd suggest something. We used to joke about the whole Svengali rubbish. He became our manager, which was our idea and not his, as he seemed to have a bit of what it takes; he seemed sensible. [*Laughs*] He was the world's most reluctant rock band manager ever. There are songs where we share a writing credit, such as "Alternative Ulster," where it was just one line that he came up with. There were other songs where he'd come up with a lot of the lyrics. There was no real hard and fast rule to how we wrote together.

"Alternative Ulster" has one of the most distinctive riffs of the punk era. Did you know the song had a touch of magic when you recorded it?

No, not at all. It was written for the fanzine of the same name. They'd given us some support, and Gavin Martin, who ran the fanzine, asked if we could give them "Suspect Device" as a flexi-disc to give away with the magazine, but we said it was due to be a single on our own label. So I said I'd write a song for them, and I came up with "Alternative Ulster." We played it at a show, I asked Gavin what he thought, and he said he thought it was shit. [*Laughs*] We were a little crestfallen; I remember saying to the guys that I felt it was pretty good and, of course, it's probably our most beloved song. The version you hear on the record was recorded as a demo for Island Records, who almost signed us. We just recorded it as we did it live, and Ed Hollis, the producer, said we needed to double up the guitars. Of course, there was no click or count-in for the riff, so I had no way of knowing when it was about to start to try to double it. [*Laughs*] I had to totally guess where the first guitar came in; it took forever to try to get the second guitar close to the first guitar.

"Barbed Wire Love" has, surprisingly, become a perennial favorite, considering that it was all done a bit tongue-in-cheek.

I know; it was done as a bit of light relief, just to see if we could pull off those doo-wop harmonies, which sounded pretty good in the studio. We tried to come up with as many bad puns as we could, and somehow it's become a song that the fans love to sing along with. We were a rock 'n' roll band and it was supposed to be fun.

VIRGINIA TURBETT/REDFERNS

Stiff Little Fingers in action in Brixton, South London, in 1979; [*from left*] Jake Burns, Brian Faloon, Ali McMordie and Henry Cluney

"We just tuned to whoever's guitar sounded most in tune. That's how green we were in the studio!"

We were really just taking the piss out of ourselves, as people were saying we were po-faced and just singing about the troubles in Belfast. The first time we played in America, a girl said to us that she really loved that song about shooting drugs up — "setting your arm alight." I had to tell her it was an Armalite rifle. [*Laughs*]

How did you divide guitar parts with Henry Cluney?

We literally played the same thing as each other. I was, effectively, the lead guitarist, but most of the time we'd just both be playing the same inversions of chords. I think that was actually part of the sound; it was like the way that bands double-track rhythm guitar parts on record to thicken things up. The lead parts were very much worked out in advance as counter-melodies, as I wasn't the world's most inventive guitarist. It made it very powerful live, almost a Ramones kind of mindset of powering through the chords. I guess it made it a little one-dimensional; on the next album we started looking at the idea of different inversions to a degree. It was very basic.

What were the guitars and amps that you used?

I had an Antoria Les Paul copy that cost about $200; that was my first decent guitar. Prior to that I had a Woolworths guitar, an Audition, that cost about $20, that was a nightmare to play. Henry had a Kawai Strat copy that was probably about the same price as the Antoria. I plugged into a Marshall amp in the studio that was already there. I don't know what model, but it was ancient, and it was 50 watts. It distorted and sounded great and that was good enough for me. I can't remember what Henry used for the life of me.

What got you into playing?

Rory Gallagher, initially. I was 11 when I saw a Taste farewell concert on TV in Northern Ireland. This noise came from the TV, and it transfixed me; I just sat there with eyes like saucers. I decided there and then that I wanted to be Rory Gallagher. I had to badger my parents for a couple of years for a guitar. They did buy me *On the Boards*, the Taste album, but that just made me worse. This would have been about 1969/70. I bought *Led Zeppelin II* for Christmas that year. It was the perfect time for someone who really wanted to get into guitars; there were so many guitar heroes coming through. I was really into bands like Deep Purple, but then Dr. Feelgood came along, and Wilko Johnson was it. There was nothing like Dr. Feelgood before they came along — the image, the songs, Wilko's unique style. I'd got tired of the long, virtuoso soloing of heavy rock, and the Feelgoods seemed to be the very thing, shortly followed by all the great new punk music that we were listening to. My entire guitar style, for whatever that's worth, is a mixture of Rory and Wilko.

Where were you hearing punk music in Northern Ireland? There wasn't a lot of it there back in 1976 and '77.

John Peel's radio show was where you heard things that you'd read about in the weekly music papers. Bands would be afraid to come over because of the Troubles. Suddenly the Feelgoods, Graham Parker, the Damned and the Stranglers were coming over. Very few people would play there prior to that — except Rory, of course.

Listening to it now, how do you feel about *Inflammable Material*?

I don't think I've really listened to it for many, many years, except for the odd track if we're thinking of putting it back into the live set, just to remember how it went. I think it was raw and urgent and conveyed the spirit of who we were really well. I know it always crops up on those "essential punk albums" lists, and I think that's because there is such an honesty about it and the songs are really strong, except for maybe "Closed Groove," which I don't think really fits in with the rest of the album. I think it sounds rough, I guess. We can certainly play the songs so much better now, but that's a part of the charm and what made the record work at the time — the whole "lightning in a bottle" cliché. It was of its time — the four guys in the studio. A good song is a good song; it doesn't really matter how well a song is recorded if you're not starting out with a good tune.

What's coming up?

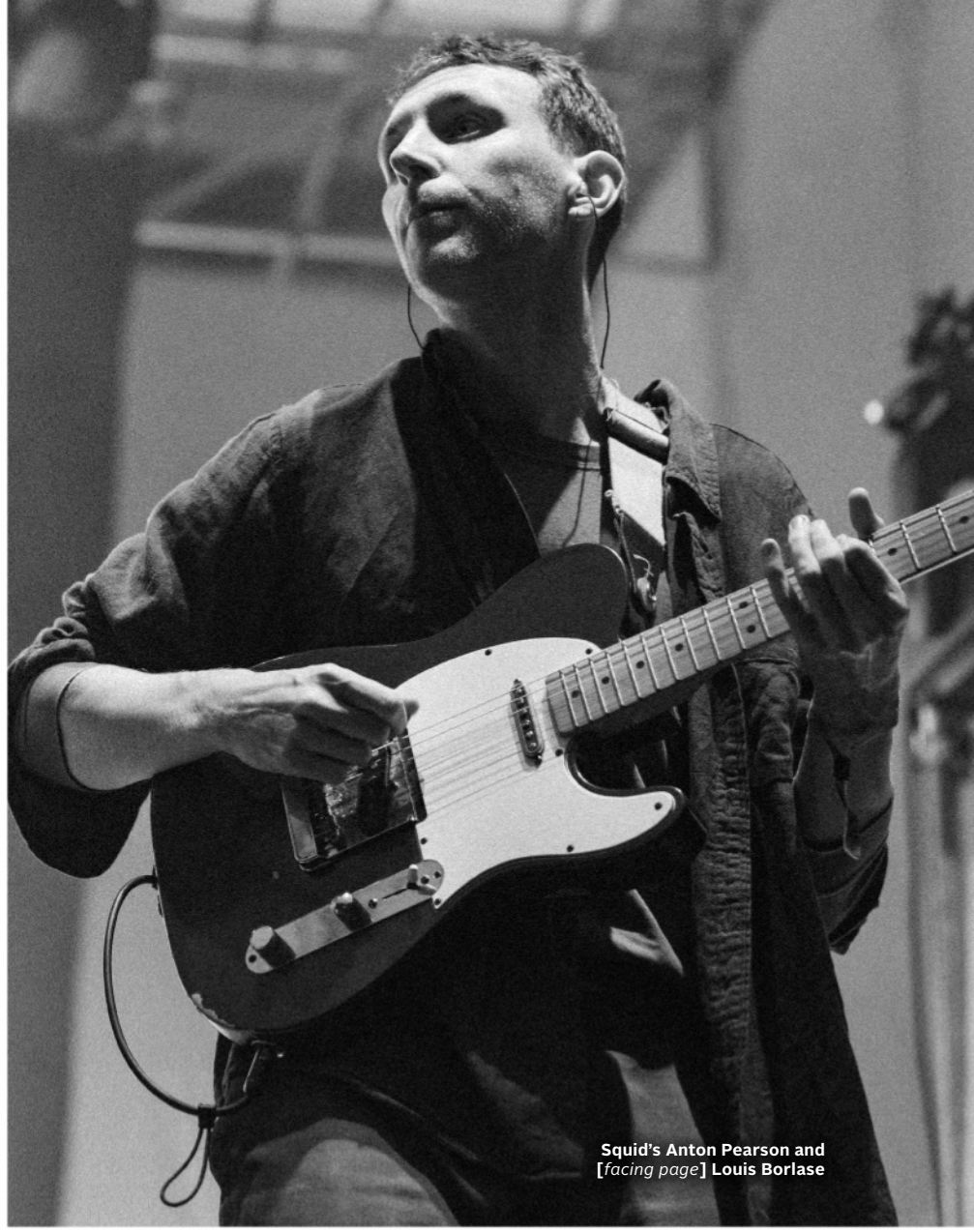
We've got nearly enough songs together for a new album, so that's in the pipeline. We're touring the U.S. and U.K. through 2024. I guess my voice isn't quite as raw as it used to be as I learnt how to sing. [*Laughs*] We're still having fun; you can moan about the travel and everything, but the moment you walk on stage, you remember why you're doing this. If a crowd ever seems a little lukewarm, I can look down at the set list and think about what great songs we've got coming up. Of course, then I think to myself, "If they don't work, then we're really fucked." [*Laughs*]

Have an idea for a Lost Classics interview? Let us know at gwsoundingboard@futurenet.com. Operators are standing by! (Sort of...)

Squid Gets Some Ink

HOW U.K. UPSTARTS SQUID OVERCAME IMPOSTER SYNDROME TO DEVELOP A MAGNETIC POST-PUNK GUITAR SOUND

By Gregory Adams



Squid's Anton Pearson and [*facing page*] Louis Borlase

SINCE 2016, U.K. quintet Squid have made a big splash through their blend of razor's-edge post-punk riffing and deceptively complex, hypnotic polyrhythmia — a feat on full display across their recently released sophomore full-length, *O Monolith*. The act have amassed a sizable fandom and plenty of critical adoration along the way, to the point where they're now picking up prized spots at summer institutions, including the U.K.'s Glastonbury Festival. While Squid's music has earned them that acclaim, guitarist Anton Pearson nevertheless says he and the rest of the group experienced a daunting wave of imposter syndrome the moment they walked into Peter Gabriel's Real World Studios in Wiltshire, England, to make their latest release.

"Going somewhere like Real World where massive, massive artists record on a regular basis — artists that are way bigger than we ever want to be — felt a bit strange," Pearson says of tracking in the same room that's hosted the likes of Harry Styles, Roger Waters, Robert Plant and more. He does, however, suggest that Squid's comparatively modest residency yielded monolithic results. "We heard about other artists that stayed there for six months and spent shitloads of money making albums; we were there for two weeks. It never felt familiar, but we did manage to get comfortable enough to feel like we were performing our best."

"Maybe part of the imposter syndrome is just how mad it was to be given that much trust and understanding, that someone's got so much faith in your music to let you go in and work on a project," says co-guitarist Louis Borlase of why they felt so gob-smacked to be recording at the high-profile studio. What's clear, though, is that Squid have made some giant leaps since their humble beginnings. "When we first started making music together, our main ambition was to play a couple of shows to our friends in the city we were living in," Borlase says. "Once we realized that was achievable, we were like, 'Maybe one day we'll play a couple shows in Europe?' So every stage we've kind of felt like, 'Whoa... this wasn't supposed to happen.'"

Squid arguably stumbled into their latest collection with a similar sense of wonder. Just after releasing *Bright Green Field* in 2021, the band — Pearson, Borlase, bassist Laurie Nankivell, keyboardist Arthur Leadbetter and drummer/vocalist Ollie Judge — set off on their exploratory "Fieldworks" tour, which was to focus on a series of loose, in-progress jams rather than the tightly coiled bursts of their first full-length. Squid were truly working without a net — "jamming ideas when we probably shouldn't have been," is how Borlase puts it — though that free-and-easy approach had technically been baked into their DNA since they got their start at a hometown jazz hole.

"We started out having fairly frequent jam sessions in Brighton when we used to go to a little venue there called the Verdict," Borlase says of Squid's improv-based beginnings, which were egged on by a booker that liked how the act shook up the sonics for the show-spot's usual clientele. "At the time, [*the Verdict*] was known as a place where old men go to listen to indulgent jazz on the weekdays."

When it comes to *O Monolith*, the group's second full-length release through experimental imprint Warp Records, Squid indeed know their way around a meter-dizzy arrangement; take how drums, bass and guitars duck and weave through staggered, alternating and sometimes

RALLY FESTIVAL & SIENNA LORRAINE GRAY (BOTH PHOTOS)

competing phrases of 3's, 4's, 5's and 6's on album closer "If You Has Seen the Bull's Swimming Attempts You Would Have Stayed Away." Then again, the group say the complexity of a Squid song is more organic and vibe-based than the metering suggests. "We're not interested in trying to challenge ourselves by being like, 'Let's try and do this number over that number,'" Pearson says of Squid's rhythmic intent, noting how the band are more influenced by the minimalist compositions of Steven Reich than, say, a flashy math-metal moment.

Eventually, Squid's sprawling "Fieldworks" concert jams were refined during a rehearsal period at an airport hangar-cum-rehearsal studio not too far away from Real World, where they'd ultimately record *O Monolith* with longtime producer Dan Carey (Wet Leg, Franz Ferdinand). Paradoxically, having the rhythm section tighten up album pieces like "Undergrowth" led Pearson and Borlase to get extra expressive and experimental with their guitar texturing — in this case, think uncomfortably undulated, low-string hammer-on/pull-off accents; leads chopped-and-stuttered by granular effects; and Borlase's mutated, country-western funkiness.

"Quite archetypally, that bass line led us to interweave playful and bouncier parts, single-string [*lines*] and, on my behalf, kind of losing the pick and playing with more of a chicken-pick style," he says of coloring above Nankivell's leanly anchored rhythm. The song was also the first Squid piece where Borlase contrasted co-guitarist Pearson's range with a "true open tuning." "Usually we use DADGAD and DADAAD, but 'Undergrowth,' for me, was open C — [*it gives off*] a real major quality to some of the guitar parts," he says; it's notable that his bandmate is in DADGAD the whole album through.

The *O Monolith* sessions likewise balanced Squid's traditional gear setups with sonic experimentation. For Pearson, live takes with the full band were often taken while strapped to an old Strat of Carey's, though the Squid guitarist also had his Mexican Tele and a DuoSonic nearby for overdubs. Juggling guitars was more complicated for southpaw Borlase, meaning he generally turned to his left-handed Tele with a bell-clear Tonerider humbucker dropped into the neck position. While he didn't borrow any guitars, Borlase did dial up the bulk of his tones with Carey's recently acquired Magnatone head or the producer's Mesa Boogie amp that also was featured prominently on *Bright Green Field*. Despite this, both guitarists say the tone-shaping on *O Monolith* avoids the ultra-compressed textures of that earlier effort.

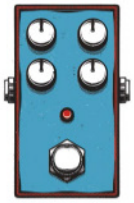
"Part of the imposter syndrome is just how mad it was to be given that much trust and understanding, that someone's got so much faith in your music to let you go in and work on a project"

They opted for an airier ambiance, which was afforded to them by the spacious, high-ceiling conditions at Real World.

O Monolith likewise opens up Squid's songwriting aesthetic. Beyond the weirdo funk of "Undergrowth," the record vaults from sun-blinded psych jams ("Siphon Song"), toward tension-driven post-rock rhumbas ("After the Flash"), distortion-pressed carnival segues ("Devil's Den") and spidery, gain-surged punk-ups ("Green Light"). "We're aware that the music can be quite disparate and varied over the course of an album; that's just the nature of how we write," Pearson says of the mix on *O Monolith*.

Whether taking into account the recording sessions at Gabriel's Real World Studios or the boldly varied sonics captured within, Squid's latest collection of songs reflects an overall leveling up for the project. For their part, Borlase knows he and Pearson pushed themselves further than ever before. What he hadn't anticipated was that the band had simultaneously delivered their most confrontational and most crowd-pleasing collection yet.

"My thought on it was we'd made something far more 'out there' than it really was," the guitarist says, though he embraces Squid's current dynamics whole-heartedly. "It turns out [O Monolith *is*] a more accessible record for a lot of people than *Bright Green Field*. It's just that the softer moments are softer and the chaotic moments are arguably more chaotic. I suppose what that's really saying is we've improved the full spectrum, that push and pull between music that we find challenging and music that is embracing simplicity."



MY PEDALBOARD
YVETTE YOUNG

WHAT THE COVET GUITARIST SEES WHEN SHE LOOKS DOWN

Interview by Andrew Daly

"I ORGANIZE EVERYTHING by stereo, just in case I want to run stuff in stereo. It's nice to have a device to point to on my board where I know it won't reduce things to mono. Most of my stereo effects are at the end of my board so I can experiment. But in general, having my gain and modulation pedals at the beginning of my board — and the reverb and stuff later — is nice.

"I have an EarthQuaker Devices Warden optical compressor. From there, I've got a D'Addario TC20 tuner, followed by a Beetronics Fatbee Overdrive and ZVEX Mastotron [*silicon*] fuzz. Next is the Ground Control Audio Noodles, which is like an EQ and gain combined; I use that when I'm looking to push specific frequencies. Then I have a Boss OC-5 Octave, which leads to my Electronic Audio Experiments Longsword, a bass overdrive that gives me more control over which frequencies push forward when I want to take more risks. That, and the little boost, adds grit to my delay. I also have a great modulation pedal, the Caroline Guitar Somersault Lo-Fi Modulator, followed by the Walrus Audio Julianna chorus/vibrato.

"Most of my stereo effects are at the end of my board so that I can experiment"

"I have a ton of delays, but the MXR Carbon Copy Deluxe is my favorite as far as analog goes. I also love the EarthQuaker Devices Avalanche Run V2, a more pronounced rhythmic delay, and a Boss DD-3 Digital Delay. That brings me to my Meris Mercury7 Reverb and Hologram Electronics Microcosm. I use that for transitions and granular stuff, but the multi-delay is nice too.

"That's the main stuff, but I do have a Universal Audio Galaxy '74 Tape Echo & Reverb; I use that for stacked delay stuff. And I have a bunch of DigiTech stuff, like the Whammy Ricochet and the FreqOut. The Ricochet is my newest addition; I use it when I want to make my pitch plummet or go off the deep end. The FreqOut is for when I want some controlled feedback."

Yvette Young on stage in Sacramento in 2022

IF I HAD TO CHOOSE ONE PEDAL FOR A FULL SHOW:
"The EarthQuaker Devices Avalanche Run V2. While I love my delay pedals and my Warden compression pedal, I could use only the Avalanche Run and still be able to make everything sound pretty. I'd use it subtly and keep it nice and low in the mix."

TIM MOSENFELDER/GETTY IMAGES (YOUNG) COURTESY OF YVETTE YOUNG (BOARD)

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Story by **AMIT SHARMA**

PARANORMAL ACTIVITY

Activity guitarist and **Trap Door Electronics** head honcho **TRAVIS JOHNSON** thrives in that hard-to-find world where electronics and synths peacefully coexist with heavily effected guitars

THOUGH HE'S A SELF-DESCRIBED "guitar junkie," having played in a number of bands over the years and built up a solid profile as a pedal builder for Death by Audio and a new company, Trap Door Electronics, Travis Johnson enjoys letting his instrument play more of a supporting role in his newest project, Activity.

The Brooklyn-based quartet just released their second album, *Spirit in the Room*, with electronics and synths co-existing with heavily effected clean guitars — to the point where it can be a challenge discerning which is exactly which. It's this ethereal and eclectic approach to sonic experimentation that allows Johnson and his bandmates — Jess Rees (guitar/vocals/keys), Bri DiGioia (bass/vocals) and Steven Levine (drums) — to prevail in the abstract, dreaming up floaty atmospheres that eventually morph into meditative trances. As he explains to *Guitar World*, the group is undertaking more of a modern twist on psychedelic rock, though with some obscure

[*far left*] Travis Johnson in action with Activity. "While this is the furthest I've ever been from 'guitar music,' the guitar is the only thing I truly know how to play," he says
[*left*] The Exit Index Redux pedal by Johnson's company, Trap Door Electronics — "mutant tremolo, gnarled distortion"

MAKSIM AKELIN (JOHNSON) TRAP DOOR ELECTRONICS (PEDAL)

vintage influences coalescing with left-field British sounds from the Nineties.

"I guess it was a conscious decision to have the guitars sit in the background like that," Johnson says. "Sometimes it's up front, but a lot of the time it's not. We're influenced by a lot of krautrock like Can and Neu! and more recent stuff like Broadcast, Portishead and Beak. With those bands, there *is* guitar — it's definitely *in* there — but quite often you can't tell if it's the main thing the song was written around. We're all about the swirl of noise as a whole.

"And while this is the furthest I've ever been from 'guitar music,' the guitar is the only thing I truly know how to play. My previous projects were always inching closer and closer to this sound. I started off playing indie rock, which is very guitar-driven, then moved toward music that was mixed with electronics but still mainly guitars. Then I got more into samples in my previous band, Grooms. When that band ended, it was close to this, and now I've decided to go even further in that direction.

What's your approach when it comes to blending guitars with other instruments like keyboards and synths?

The electronic stuff is often written on a sampler like the Elektron Digitakt. Then we bring it into the practice space for the instruments to play over. We'll have the sample going through the PA really loud and the rest of us feeling out whatever we can imagine or do. It pushes you into a place where you're no longer having to carry the song, because there's already this pre-existing core to it. It's this subliminal thing. And a lot of the pedals I use, including what I make in my own company, Trap Door Electronics, are to make guitars sound *less* like guitars.

It's an interesting talking point. To some guitarists that might sound like sacrilege; to others, that's often where the beauty lies.

A lot of it boils down to taste and preference. Do you want the sound of a drum machine with a really distorted guitar over it, like Nine Inch Nails? Or do you want to hear something more subtle, where it's an element but not single-handedly carrying the song? Both are totally cool, but I guess we fit into the latter. It's hard to say what our approach is because it took such a long time for us to get where we are now, honing it so that when I get something going on the sampler, I have a good idea of what I want everything else to be. It took time feeling it out. Having references like Can really helped, because I often wonder what they would do. But interestingly they didn't have all the gear we have now! I guess I'm going along with what sounds cool with the tools available to me.

Tell us about your main guitars and amps on this album.

My main guitar is an American Jaguar from 2004, or sometimes a crappy Nineties Squier Strat, which I put Fender American Vintage '65 pickups in. All my guitars are in weird tunings, and these are tunings I've always generally stuck with. I really like [*low to high*] C♯ G♯ C♯ F F C, which has this nice "seventh chord" kinda sound [*C♯maj7*]. None of my guitars are that expensive; it's just the stuff I could afford at the time, going into a Vibrolux, which is a great pedal-platform amp.

Speaking of pedals, tell us more about your role at Death by Audio.

I started off by just helping out, and by the end I was a small-percentage owner. At some point in 2018 I decided it was time to move on and do other things, but I hadn't really figured out what that was at that point. So a lot of the stuff you're hearing is from Death by Audio. Almost every song on this album has one of their pedals. My friend Jeff Berner [*ex-Psychic TV*] produced the album and actually ended up telling me to turn the Evil Filter off because it was always on! I'd run on a certain setting for the cutoff with a Moog expression pedal, which I'm constantly using for different parts. I might go for a really rolled-off kind of sound with no highs, for example. And I was also using the Death by Audio Rooms [*Stereo Reverb*] a lot. The distortion on the first album came from a JHS Colour Box; on this one it was the Recovery Effects Pearl. I also love my Boss PS-3 Pitch Shifter/Delay.

On which songs specifically can we hear these pedals?

On "Department of Blood," there's no guitar at all. By the third track, "Careful Let's Sleepwalk," things get *really* noisy. Me and Jess were going for this "total chaos in one take" kinda vibe, going as crazy as we can. For me, a lot of those extreme noises came from the PS-3 on the detune setting. I'd send that into the reverb and do a lot of string scrapes to make it sound really atmospheric. There are also some actual guitar parts on the song, too... but they're

[*above*] Johnson — with his 2004 Fender Jaguar — on stage with Activity; [*top right*] "The heart of the Exit Index Redux is [*its*] obsolete op-amp, which is... obsolete! I can only find old ones," Johnson says

pretty minimal! My favorite song on the album is "Where the Art Is Hung," which is sung by Jess while I do really subtle stuff in the background. I'd be adjusting the cut-off on the Evil Filter with massive amounts of reverb from the Rooms alongside some detune from the PS-3. I'd rock the expression pedal fully open for that Cocteau Twins (Lexicon 480L processor), really bright crystalline sound. Those pedals ended up on almost every song in some combination. I was also running synths through those pedals. And speaking of synth sounds, I used the Eventide PitchFactor on a few things. There's a synth setting that makes your guitar sound like a Theremin. I used that on "Sophia." Jess has a totally different rig, she uses stuff by Hudson Electronics and the Cutting Room Floor reel-to-reel overdrive/echo by Recovery Effects, among other things.

Exactly what are you hoping to achieve with Trap Door Electronics?

It all started last summer. My first pedal is the Exit Index Redux, because when I was at Death by Audio I did this limited-edition pedal there called the Exit Index. I noticed they were starting to go for more than what they should have been, and I didn't want people spending too much money on them. There were also a few things I wanted to tweak. I wanted it to get a lot louder and I wanted the expression function to do more. I'm an expression addict; I love sweeping through sounds as I'm playing. On the original I hadn't quite nailed everything it should do. I also wanted the tremolo to sound better — because it's a big weird messy tremolo pedal, basically, but one that also distorts.

It feels like good timing. Many would say the world has gone effects mad in recent years. Just look at what happened with the DigiTech Bad Monkey after JHS owner Josh Scott featured it on his YouTube channel.

It's true! I started the company not long ago and feel lucky that people have been buying my pedals. I've become more aware of new companies over the last few years — there are loads out there. As for Josh, I think it's really cool how he's started his channel and, sure, he mentions the products JHS sell, but he also loves recommending all these other companies doing cool stuff. He's the genuine article. That guy really loves pedals — to the point where he'll talk about other brands and rival products.

Aren't parts more expensive and harder to source right now?

They can be. That's another thing I realized; in the four years since I'd been at Death by Audio, things had changed. Costs were different because of Covid, especially semiconductors. The heart of the Exit Index Redux is this obsolete op-amp, which is... obsolete! I can only find old ones. I did wonder to myself if I'd chosen the wrong time to go into this, because everything is more expensive. Not prohibitively, but there's less margin for profit and things are harder to source. It took a while to get everything I needed. This pedal is basically an obsolete op-amp that wants to be abused and create this sputtering envelope tremolo sound. I bought a couple of thousand op-amps once I found them!

What's next for your brand?

Right now I'm working on the schematic for a prototype. It's a gain-stagey distortion that can go from boost to overdrive to distortion to fuzz to oscillation, with a nasty-sounding filter that can bring out a lot of different tones, depending on what you want. I think it's going to be pretty cool! This will actually be the second prototype for it because the first one came back and I wasn't in love with it, so I wanted to tweak it. I think the third pedal will have these interesting filter chips I found, which I want to experiment with. Most of it will be stuff that enables you to sound less like a guitarist and more like a synth player if you want, but it will suit more traditional applications too.

Finally, what would you say is the greatest pedal ever made?

I don't know! I will probably regret saying this, but the Boss PS-3 is amazing. I originally got it for that backwards, shimmery ambience on setting 7. That pedal came out in the mid-Nineties and decades later I still hear bands using it in the coolest ways. There are 11 modes and they all sound different. You can put a guitar or a drum machine through it, so it can do a lot more than most pedals.

For fuzz, I think the Fuzz War wins every time. It's Death by Audio's flagship and just sounds awesome, doing everything I'd want a Big Muff to do without losing any of the frequencies I want to keep when I turn it on. I'd say tuners are pretty important too! GW

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HIS FIRST
The New Boss Guitar of George Benson (1964)

Walking to New Orleans (2019)
HIS LATEST

DAVID REDFERN/REDFERNS (LEFT) ROB VERHORST/REDFERNS (RIGHT)

GEORGE BENSON

One of the all-time jazz guitar greats on meeting Jimi Hendrix, how Peter Frampton changed the course of his career and what Paul McCartney thought of his Beatles tribute

By Joe Bosso

GEORGE BENSON REALLY wants to talk about the new album he's cutting. It's his first studio recording since 2019's *Walking to New Orleans*, and as he says, "It's going to be something really special."

He starts to divulge a detail or two, then abruptly stops. "Well, that's about all I can say right now," he says. When pressed for any kinds of tidbits, he laughs and relents every so slightly. "I can't let out exactly what it is, but it's something different from anything I've ever done, and I'm working with one of the top arrangers of our time. That's about as far as I can go with that. I'm keeping it under my hat for now."

In actual fact, musically speaking, there isn't much the 80-year-old guitar legend hasn't done. After cutting his teeth in organist "Brother" Jack McDuff's jazz band in the early Sixties, Benson struck out on his own and released *The New Boss Guitar of George Benson*. From there, he never looked back. His virtuosic chops and artful sense of style, combined with an unshakable taste for adventure, quickly established him as one of the most exciting and original jazz guitarists since Charlie Christian. But Benson — also blessed with a smooth and soulful tenor singing voice — wouldn't limit his gifts to the strictly jazz market, and over the years he spanned pop, rock, R&B, disco, blues and Latin music (his

"THEY SAID, 'MAN, GEORGE BENSON WOULDN'T EVEN LET HENDRIX SIT IN AND PLAY'...

George Benson with one of his signature Ibanez GB models in the Netherlands, December 1, 1986

[*facing page*] Benson plays a Guild X-550 at the Newport Jazz Festival, July 3, 1969

1976 crossover smash, *Breezin'*, hit Number 1 on *Billboard*'s Top 200 and bagged him a pair of Grammys).

"Anytime somebody says, 'What's George doing playing this kind of music?' I want to say, 'Well, why shouldn't I?'" Benson says. "I like to challenge myself." It would seem he's never at a loss for new avenues to explore; just last year, he contributed velvety solos on funk master Bootsy Collins' groove slammer "The Power of One." Speaking of his 2018 collaboration with the virtual band Gorillaz on their trippy single "Humility," Benson says, "When I heard their name, I said, 'Gorillaz? I don't know, man.' Then I found out they were a rock group or a pop group from London, and I said, 'Well, let me hear what they've got.' At first, I didn't know what to do, but I hate to disappoint people. Finally, I told the engineer, 'Tell you what — put me in the middle of that band. Turn the big speakers on like I'm in a live situation.' When he did that, I knew what to play."

As he enters his ninth decade, Benson reveals that the guitar still holds the same allure as when he began playing. "I've never gotten tired of the sound of the instrument," he says. "It's such an incredible thing — the relationship of wood and strings, how you can create tones and project a vibe. The guitar speaks to me. When I play a note, I can shape the sound. I can make it thin, skinny and harsh, or I can warm it up and make it sound very enticing and romantic."

You started making records at age nine. Did you know back then that you had a gift?

People told me that all my life, but I didn't know what it meant. I just knew music was important to me. I liked the feeling it gave me. My mother was a singer. I learned the classics from her because she was always humming along to something. I thought I was quite ordinary, in fact. I thought everybody was ordinary. [*Laughs*]

Among your influences was Hank Garland, who wasn't jazz, per se; he played on a lot of country and rock 'n' roll hits. What was it about his playing that you tried to absorb?

Power. His command of the guitar. Everything was so deliberate, and he had so much energy. He had that country thing in that he sounded very honest and straight ahead. There was no hesitation in how he played. He was very, very powerful. He also had great command of harmony and theory. His chord progressions were straight ahead but still very effective.

During the Sixties, did any of the big rock guitarists make a dramatic impact on you?

There's a few from that era. Eric Clapton was one, and Jimi Hendrix was another one. There were others, but those two guys were very influential back then. People were like, "Hey man, have you heard what Clapton is playing?" I said, "Who?" "Clapton, man." So pretty soon it became something you had to do. You had to find out what he was doing, and then you find out what he was doing was important.

Did you ever meet Hendrix?

Of course. I met Hendrix before his career blew up. Everything I heard him play was special. He came by to see us one night when I was playing in Harlem, down the street from James Brown at the Apollo Theater. He was playing with the Isley Brothers at the time. They told the story about that night a few years later in an article. They said, "Man, George Benson wouldn't even let Hendrix sit in and

AND RONNIE ISLEY SAID, 'IT'S A GOOD THING, BECAUSE NOBODY CAN BEAT GEORGE BENSON ON THE GUITAR'"

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES (LEFT) JOHN KEEBLE/GETTY IMAGES (RIGHT)

play." And Ronnie Isley said, "It's a good thing, because nobody can beat George Benson on the guitar." [*Laughs*]

This was before you hooked up with Ibanez. Back then, you favored Guild.
I was using mostly Guild guitars. These two brothers owned the company, and one of them said, "Man, I heard a young guy play guitar the other night. He is spectacular. You've got to sign him up." So they did. They signed me up and they gave me several guitars — beautiful instruments. I was with them for a few years until I ran into Ibanez. By that time I had soured my deal with Guild because they saw me playing another guitar and they got incensed by it. They wouldn't even talk to me after that. I couldn't get anybody on the phone anymore — until *Breezin'* came out and Ibanez hooked me up. Then they started calling me.

Miles Davis tapped you to play on *Miles in the Sky*. What was he like? Was he tough?
[*Laughs*] Everything you heard about him is true — all of the crazy things, the quirks and all that. He did one interview in his whole career. One. He signed one autograph that I know of. One. Different kind of guy.

I take it he was intimidating in the studio.
Yes, somewhat. I didn't do anything to get him off center, but I knew a lot of people who did, and they didn't like the result. I stayed away from all of that. We were actually friends. I used to see him in places, and he always acknowledged me and we had good conversations. I think he was trying to get me to join his band at the time I did the album with him. My manager said, "You can't do that."

Did Miles direct you on how he wanted you to play?
That's what made him great — he didn't do that. When I was doing the record with Miles, [*drummer*] Tony Williams tried to tell me what to play, and Miles said to him, "Tony, play your drums, man. Stop trying to tell George what to play. And on second thought, take your drums and set up in the corner out there. You're too loud." He put Tony way in the corner of the studio. [*Laughs*]

Legendary A&R man John Hammond signed you to Columbia. I imagine you two had some great musical discussions.
All the time. He was probably the greatest A&R man I've ever met — I think in history, to tell you the truth — because he didn't try to tell you what to play. He just said, "Play it. Let's hear what you've got. Play it." If he heard two bars he liked, he said, "I'm turning the recording button on now." I used to go up to his office on Sixth Avenue and sit with him. He told me all these wonderful stories about the people he discovered — Billie Holiday, Charlie Christian, Count Basie.

John had an ear for brilliant singers and songwriters, but he also loved guitarists. He signed Stevie Ray Vaughan and, as you mentioned, Charlie Christian.
He told me about Charlie Christian. Somebody told John, "The greatest guitar player in this country is up in Oklahoma City." So he jumped in his car and hopped over to Oklahoma City until he caught up with Charlie Christian, who was playing with his brother on bass. John loved Charlie and tried to get him to leave the band to come to L.A. with him. Charlie refused — "I ain't going nowhere without my brother." Well, John stayed there a few days, took Charlie shopping, and finally he convinced him to go to L.A. John went to see Benny Goodman and said, "Man, this kid is the baddest cat in the world on guitar." And Goodman said, "It doesn't make any difference. I cannot put another African-American in my band. I'm having problems booking the band now in the South."

So one night John snuck Charlie into the band. He snuck a stool and an amp onto the bandstand when Benny Goodman was taking a break. Benny came back and saw Charlie on his bandstand. Rather than make a fuss, he called out for "Rosetta" and pointed out the solos

"IT BECAME SOMETHING YOU HAD TO DO. YOU HAD TO FIND OUT WHAT ERIC CLAPTON

— "Horns, all right, now guitar!" Charlie started playing and everybody jumped out of their seats. They never heard anything like that. They ran over to the bandstand and they wouldn't let him stop playing. That's how he got into Benny Goodman's band.

I've always loved your tribute to the Beatles, 1970's *The Other Side of Abbey Road*. Did any of the Fab Four ever talk to you about it?
When that record came out, the industry hated it. All the jazz people hated it. But Paul McCartney sent word back to me — "Man, we love what you did with our music." That was great compensation. I knew the album would mean something one day.

A few years later, *Breezin'* hit Number 1. What did you think at the time?
That it was impossible! [*Laughs*] I'll tell you, the guy who probably helped me get there was Peter Frampton. Remember, he had the biggest record ever at the time; he was dominating the covers of magazines. He was the one you had to defeat in order to get the cover of *Record World* and all those magazines. But he said something in an article that really spurred me on. He said, "I listen to George Benson records all the time."

I was like, "What? You mean this genius, this kid selling all these records, listens to my music? I don't sell no records!" [*Laughs*] But that's what he said. So I said, "Let me listen to his records and see what he's doing that makes his music so outstanding." I started listening to his music, and I thought, "OK, he's got percussion over here, and he's got that going on. Let me try some of that."

You became something of a pop star. You also did disco tunes. Did you get flak from any of your early jazz fans?
Always. But one thing I understand about this world, if you go left, they'll say, "You should have gone right," and vice versa. That's common stuff, and it happened to a lot of my friends. It broke Wes Montgomery's heart when he went home to play in Indianapolis. He was a star by then, and he was playing at a local arena downtown. Every time he played a pop tune, his older fans would boo. Then he would play the jazz tunes and they would go crazy. He was caught in the middle of all of that. I understand how that works.

Benson in action in Southend-on-Sea, England, June 29, 2022

[*facing page*] Benson at home, September 5, 1977

The greatest thing that happened to me in that regard was when I did a record with Frank Sinatra. He asked me to sit beside him, and he said, "George, your guitar playing, we all know what that is, man. You're fantastic. But I love your voice." After he said that, I couldn't listen to people talk about my vocals anymore. I didn't even hear them.

Speaking of vocals, what about scatting? Many listeners never heard you do that until you came out with "On Broadway" and "This Masquerade." How does scatting inform your phrasing on the guitar?
It's all the same brain. They both have their physical limitations. When one cannot do a certain thing, the other one can. It took me years to figure. When I was a kid, I'd listen to Charlie Parker's "Just Friends." His solo — I couldn't play it, but I could sing every note. When I started doing that on my records, I found that was easy. Of course, what I was doing was lightweight compared to Charlie Parker, but I did like improvising.

How many signature models have you had with Ibanez?
I think we've got about 15 signature guitars, maybe more. What I really like is that they offer refinements for guitar collectors and people who are trying to find something different to play. It gives them options, and every now and then they'll come up with a gem like the GB10, something very special that you've got to have in your collection.

You've been with the company for more than 40 years. Is there some sort of refinement on any of the guitars you haven't done yet?
No, I'm taking information from people who play guitar. The new up-and-coming people are still giving me information. The company takes that information to make the best guitars they can. GW

WAS DOING — AND THEN YOU FIND OUT WHAT HE WAS DOING WAS IMPORTANT"

"I use those vintage Les Pauls and Teles and Strats and 335s because I want to get the right sound for the music," Bonamassa says

DELUXE EDITION

by Jim Beaugez

JOE BONAMASSA

TALKS TURN-OF-THE-CENTURY CAREER STRUGGLES, THE LEAN-AND-MEAN BLUES-COVERS ALBUM THAT CHANGED HIS FATE IN 2003 — AND ITS BIGGER-BUDGET 2023 SEQUEL, *BLUES DELUXE VOL. 2*

FOR THE PAST two decades, Joe Bonamassa has been a familiar face in these pages, as a widely appreciated, virtuosic blues guitarist, as well as an avid caretaker of the instrument's legacy, who has collected and preserved not only hundreds of guitars, but also mountains of classic amplifiers and guitar ephemera.

As such, it might be difficult for readers today to imagine a time when he was just another struggling guitarist trying to make his mark in music. But after being ushered into the ranks of B.B. King and Danny Gatton before age 13, and forming the band Bloodline with Waylon Krieger, Erin Davis and Berry Oakley Jr. — the sons of Robby Krieger of the Doors, Miles Davis and the Allman Brothers Band bassist — Smokin' Joe Bonamassa, as he was known then, tanked as a solo artist.

And what was his plan B when his high-profile 2000 debut, *A New Day Yesterday*, and its 2002 follow-up, *So, It's Like That*, failed to meet expectations? "Uh, I don't know, become a cop?" he says today, drolly. Instead of trading his love of the beat for a life on the beat, though, he took the experience as a call to follow his own instincts.

Now that he had some real blues to sing about, Bonamassa went back to his musical roots in search of the spark that lit him up years earlier. He found it, and in turn a rabid audience, with his 2003 covers record, *Blues Deluxe*, which featured a rejuvenated Bonamassa taking on songs by Robert Johnson, B.B. King, John Lee Hooker, Buddy Guy and others.

"I've had a couple of breakouts," he says. "I would say in 2003 [*with* Blues Deluxe], after we started getting some traction in Europe, and then in 2009 when we did the Royal Albert Hall for the first time — that was the real explosion. But everything had been leading up to that moment."

Blues Deluxe Vol. 2, which was released in October, doesn't cover the same old ground, though. Backed by his core band as well as a bright and blustery horn section and jump-blues

Photograph by Kit Wood

piano, Bonamassa puts his spin on the Peter Green-era Fleetwood Mac roadhouse jam "Lazy Poker Blues," Bobby Bland's soul classic "Twenty-Four Hour Blues" and six other blues tunes. There's also a pair of originals, one co-written with Tom Hambridge, and the album-closer, "Is It Safe to Go Home," written by Josh Smith — Bonamassa's fellow *Guitar World* columnist — who also produced the album.

We talked with Bonamassa about how things have changed for him since his first *Blues Deluxe* installment, curating obscure cuts from lesser-known blues artists, and, of course, the vintage guitars and amps he used to bring *Blues Deluxe Vol. 2* to life.

Twenty years ago, *Blues Deluxe* was something of a last-ditch effort to save your music career. Can you take us back to those days?

I was on Sony Music and was dropped. By 2003, I had no record deal, no prospects and couldn't draw a crowd. My manager and I had to make a choice. It's either we're gonna close the doors [*and*] I'll be a session guy or a road player or whatever. And he said, "Let's just make a blues record and fuck it all," you know? Because at that point we were listening to consultants, and radio this and that, and it just wasn't me. So, I made a "me" record, and it was the first record I made that really connected to people. We were very lucky that it connected the way it did. We made the record in seven days with $10,000.

I thought [*doing* Blues Deluxe Vol. 2] would be a fun project — pick some songs, do it in the [*same*] spirit and ask the question, 'Hey, am I better now or worse now than I was 20 years ago?' I think I'm a better singer now, and I think a more mature artist, and that's pretty much [*why*] we picked songs that meant something, that were a little more sophisticated than the first record, with real strings and horns because we had a budget — unlike the first record.

Why do you think the original *Blues Deluxe* resonated with an audience where your first two albums didn't?

When an artist stops listening to other people's advice about what they should be doing and goes, 'I'm gonna do it my way,' that's when you start winning. You have to tap into something in your soul that you believe in, because if you don't believe in it, how are you gonna get anybody else to believe in it? That's really what happened, and I think that's why it resonated at that point.

"I think I'm a better singer now, a more mature artist — that's why we picked songs that meant something"

ELEANOR JANE

There are definitely some more obscure names here than on the first volume. How did you narrow down the tracklist?

Josh [*Smith, producer*] had a list, I had a list. We both agreed that we wanted to do "Twenty-Four Hour Blues" off *Dreamer* [*1974*] from Bobby Bland. I wanted to do "I Want to Shout About It," because that was always one of my favorite Ronnie Earl songs, and then "[*Well I*] Done Got Over It," the Bobby Parker song. And then we did the Pee Wee Crayton song "Win-O." It's just one of those things where before you know it, you've got a record.

From a guitar-playing perspective, did these songs challenge you in a way that maybe the ones on the first volume didn't?

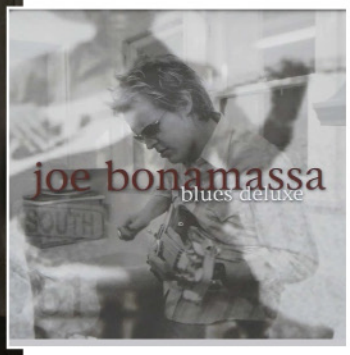
From a guitar standpoint, none of it's giant stuff. I mean, you just gotta play the blues, you know? But when you're 25 and nobody gives a shit, you've got two chips on your shoulders. When you're 45 and established, you're not not so keen on just ramming your guitar prowess down everybody's throat all the time. To me, the challenge is mitigating those urges to overplay, but really stinging the notes and making it say something.

How do you think you've grown during the two decades the *Blues Deluxe* albums bookend?

I'm more seasoned, and you hear things

differently. You phrase things differently. That's one of the most obvious differences between [*now and*] 20 years ago. My voice is clearer, it's higher, and it's just because I learned how to sing. When I was 25, I didn't know how to sing. I was shouting into a microphone and wondering why it sounded so rough. But then I took all the lessons and figured it out.

When in your life did a name like Pee Wee Crayton come into play?
Before I heard Pee Wee's music, I saw a picture of him holding a very rare '55 Fiesta Red Strat that Leo Fender built for him.



He was an L.A. guy, and the guitar is a very famous guitar, which is at the Blues Hall of Fame Museum in Memphis. He had a run from like, '58 to '61; those were his years, and he was a big star in the blues community. He had a great way of phrasing and playing and singing, and just the song structures I thought were cool. He's just one of those guys that, once you do the deep-dive into the late-Fifties blues, his name will always come up.

With your extensive guitar collection, you're able to bring anything to the table. When revisiting the *Blues Deluxe* concept, did you dig back into your gear vault?
Well, I didn't use the Jubilee Marshalls. I still use them live, but I basically used a high-powered tweed [*Fender*] Twin, a Dumble-modded Fender Vibrolux with an Ultraphonix mod and a [*Marshall*] JTM45 with a 4x12. And then for the two or three songs we cut in Nashville, I used the 3x10 Fender Bandmaster 1956 and a low-powered Twin 1956. But I use those vintage Les Pauls and Teles and Strats and 335s because I want to get the right sound for the music.

Also, you recently acquired the famous Norman Harris Broadcaster. That's a pretty important piece, not only for Fender but for electric guitar in general.
There's two things about Leo Fender. He got so many things right the first time — like, a Broadcaster is essentially a Telecaster. But because of a gentleman's agreement between Fred Gretsch and Leo Fender, they dropped the word Broadcaster. So a Nocaster is essentially a Broadcaster, but they cut the word Broadcaster off the logo. They call them clipped logos. By October of '51, with the television now becoming a thing, they renamed it a Telecaster. Now, the difference between an October '51 Telecaster and a Broadcaster, other than a very few things — like, the knobs were taller in '50, whatever — it's essentially the same guitar. But when you see Broadcaster on the headstock, the price goes up because it is a '50, and it does represent the first-year DNA. Now that guitar is 73 years old and just as relevant today as it was 73 years ago. There's not many things that have ever been designed, not just musically, but in general, that could say that. I mean, cars don't look the same, houses don't look the same, you know what I mean? Things have moved on. Yet, for some reason, the Telecaster, the classic-design Les Paul, which to me is a '57, the Stratocaster series two, gen-three P-Bass with the Strat head, the Jazzmaster, the Jaguar, all this stuff didn't go through a lot of delineations. Leo got it right the first time. The Jazz bass, other than the stack knob versus the three-knob configuration, it's essentially the same. So the Broadcasters are a very important guitar in the sense that it represents the beginning of a historical journey in American manufacturing.

What is in your current circle of favorite guitars?
Ninety percent of my guitars are in mint condition, untouched, unmolested. Perfect museum grade. Then there's about 50 to 60 guitars that are the last 10 percent, [*which*] are the ones I play on the road. Those are more beat up. So, as a collector, you have to go, is your ego large enough to take a mint '54 Strat and put some scratches into it on the stage? I was like, *no*, you know? For me, that thing's been preserved for 70 years, and it's my job to keep it preserved. Am I lucky enough to have another one that's beat up that I could play? Absolutely. So I have to thread both lines. I'm a player first; that's what affords me the guitars. But I also have to go, 'Okay, this is gonna be for the collection, this is gonna be for the stage.'

Were you true to the instruments played by the artists you were covering?
Yeah, I busted out the Flying V for the Albert thing. Albert used the '67 on "Born Under a Bad Sign," and the Korina, but he had three. And so I actually ended up using my '67 sparkling burgundy V that's in mint condition on the record. I had the [*1958 "Famous Amos"*] Korina with me and just the '67 pinged harder, and it was a little harder to play, too. But for "Lazy Poker Blues," that's the '59 sunburst Les Paul. "Done Got Over It," that's the '59 sunburst Les Paul. "Twenty-Four Hour Blues," that's a 1961 ES-355 mono, so it's basically a 335 but with 355 appointments, no Varitone, and not stereo.

> "YOU HAVE TO TAP INTO SOMETHING IN YOUR SOUL THAT YOU BELIEVE IN, BECAUSE IF YOU DON'T BELIEVE IN IT, HOW ARE YOU GONNA GET ANYBODY ELSE TO BELIEVE IN IT?"

Were there any wildcard songs, just "out there" ideas that made the cut?
Josh brought an original song that I thought was really good, and we cut it [*for*] the end of the record, a song called "Is It Safe to Go Home." I think it's one of the stars of the record.

Were there any covers that were out of left field?
We pretty much curated everything, you know? We sifted through a bunch of songs and just like, 'Hey, can I pull this off?' But the other thing is, does it need to be done? There's so many covers records now, full of songs that are well-worn paths. I don't need to add to the noise, you know what I mean? I'd rather pick songs that are killer or that mean something to us. GW

SLOWHAND IN THE '60s

A 'BURST OF ENERGY

Eric Clapton

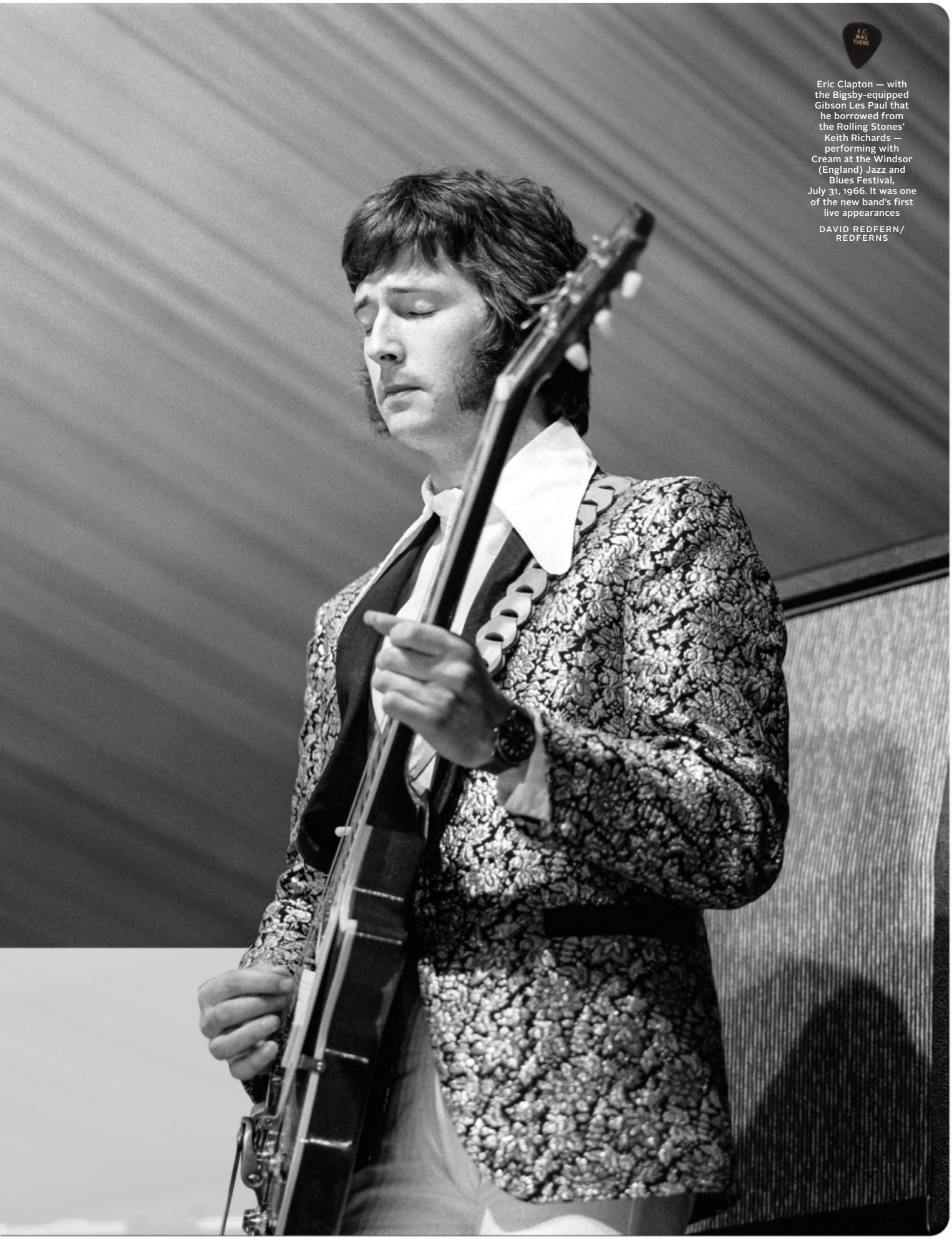
INVENTS THE MODERN ELECTRIC GUITAR SOUND AND FOREVER CHANGES HOW WE ALL PLAY GUITAR

By DAVID SINCLAIR

IT IS DIFFICULT, in retrospect, to convey the impact that Eric Clapton had on the world of electric guitar playing in 1966. For one thing, Clapton himself has spent most of his career since 1970 in denial about his achievements in revolutionizing the sound and status of the instrument, and he has been only too happy to let the spotlight fall instead on those who followed in his footsteps, including Jimi Hendrix, Jeff Beck, Jimmy Page and too many others to count.

But even allowing for Clapton's latter-day reticence, it takes a supreme effort of either memory or imagination to fully appreciate how different the state and sound of electric guitar playing was prior to the release of John Mayall's *Blues Breakers with Eric Clapton* in 1966.

The prototype guitar heroes of the Fifties and early Sixties were either moody types such as Link Wray and Duane Eddy, or bands like the Ventures and, in the U.K., the Shadows, whose guitar star was the clean-cut Hank Marvin. What they shared was a guitar sound that seemed to have been recorded at the bottom of the Grand Canyon. Layers of echo and reverb were added to a precise plectrum and fingering style that placed the ability to conjure a haunting melody cloaked in a deep, twanging



Eric Clapton — with the Bigsby-equipped Gibson Les Paul that he borrowed from the Rolling Stones' Keith Richards — performing with Cream at the Windsor (England) Jazz and Blues Festival, July 31, 1966. It was one of the new band's first live appearances

DAVID REDFERN/ REDFERNS

On May 17, 1964, the Yardbirds unexpectantly showed up at Lord Willis' house in Kent, England, for reasons that must have mattered to someone a very long time ago; [*from left*] Eric Clapton — with his pre-John Mayall Fender-and-Vox setup, Lady Willis, Yardbirds drummer Jim McCarty and guitarist Chris Dreja, who's sitting on his own Vox AC30

TOMMY LEA/DAILY MIRROR/MIRRORPIX VIA GETTY IMAGES

tone above all other considerations. Clear enunciation of individual notes played cleanly in tandem with a deft tremolo bar technique was central to the sound of records ranging from Wray's "Rumble" to any number of Shadows hits, from "Apache" to "Man of Mystery."

As the new wave of beat groups got into their stride, particularly in the U.K., guitarists became emboldened and started to take a more unfettered approach, often informed by the stylings of the original American blues guitarists. Brian Jones supplied a loud, super-aggressive slide guitar part to the front of the Rolling Stones' "I Wanna Be Your Man." Dave Davies offered a raw, runaway solo on the Kinks' first hit, "You Really Got Me." Pete Townshend introduced some startling feedback effects on the Who's "Anyway, Anyhow, Anywhere." Jeff Beck layered experimental, Eastern-sounding, psychedelic solos across the Yardbirds hit "Shapes of Things" and its B-side, "You're a Better Man Than I." But none of these early outliers had truly captured what a full-blown, modern electric guitar sound could be — or was about to become.

Clapton, meanwhile, had been not-so-quietly working up to his *piece de resistance* for some time. As the guitarist in the Yardbirds from 1963 to 1965, he gained a cult following that was out of proportion to the traditional status of a non-frontman musician in a band. This was thanks in part to his cool fashion sense and stage presence, but in even larger part to his incendiary soloing skills. The band's debut album, *Five Live Yardbirds*, released in the U.K. in December 1964, was both a blueprint and a harbinger of what was to come.

A raw, scrappy, low-budget production, *Five Live Yardbirds* was recorded without fuss or fanfare at one of the band's regular shows at the Marquee Club in London on March 20, 1964. It was notable for many things; the incredible energy of the performance was evident from the opening surge of Chuck Berry's "Too Much Monkey Business," in which Clapton and bass player Paul Samwell-Smith engage in a whirling, skirling, insanely propulsive blast of soloing that had a foretaste

ONE THING *FIVE LIVE YARDBIRDS* DID NOT POSSESS WAS ANYTHING REMOTELY RESEMBLING A MODERN LEAD GUITAR SOUND. THAT WAS ABOUT TO CHANGE...

of the punk aesthetic about it. Clapton's developing skill as a soloist was clearly on display throughout numbers such as Eddie Boyd's slow blues "Five Long Years" and a rip-roaring take on John Lee Hooker's "Louise." The recording also captured several extended improvised passages — what the band referred to as their "rave-ups" — in songs such as Howlin' Wolf's "Smokestack Lightning" and a ragged version of Bo Diddley's call-and-response epic "Here 'Tis," in which Samwell-Smith and Clapton performed a high-speed duel amid a closing sequence of indistinct aural mayhem from band and audience alike. These rave-ups were quite unlike anything that any other "pop" or beat bands of the pre-rock era had committed to tape and were a precursor of the working practices that Clapton would later pursue with monumental results in Cream.

What *Five Live Yardbirds* did *not* possess was anything remotely resembling a modern lead guitar sound. Throughout his tenure with the Yardbirds, Clapton mostly played a red Fender Telecaster through a Vox AC30. The sound this produced, although perfectly acceptable for the period, was comparatively thin and trebly with virtually no sustain. Clapton continued to use the Telecaster when he initially joined John Mayall's Bluesbreakers in April 1965. But the following month he bought a sunburst 1960 Gibson Les Paul Standard with humbucking pickups, which turned out to be a game-changer. This instrument, which became known as "the Beano Burst" after the nickname of the album he recorded with the Bluesbreakers the following year (Clapton is reading a *Beano* comic in the cover photo), has acquired a mythical status in the guitar world — not least because it was stolen soon after Clapton joined Cream in 1966 and has since vanished into a swirling mist of rumors as to its whereabouts, rumors that continue to surface to this day.

"The Les Paul has two pickups, one at the end of the neck, giving the guitar a kind of round jazz sound, and the other next to the bridge giving you the treble," Clapton explained in his 2007 autobiography. "What I would do was use the bridge pickup with all of the bass turned up, so the sound was very thick and on the edge of distortion. I also used amps that would overload. I would have the amp on full and I would have the volume on the guitar also turned up full, so everything was on full volume and overloading. I would hit a note, hold it and give it some vibrato with my fingers until it sustained and then the distortion would turn into feedback. It was all of these things, plus the distortion, that created what I suppose you could call 'my sound.'"

While the heavy, humbucking resonance of the Les Paul was key to the overall sound, so too was the new Marshall amplification that Clapton also bought into at this time. A small, innovative business run by Jim Marshall, an ex-drummer, the company was at that time based in Hanwell, West London, from where Clapton acquired a Marshall model 1962 2x12 combo based on the JTM45 design. This new setup produced a much fuller, more powerful sound than his Tele-and-Vox combo, and even before the release of the *Beano* album, it was clear something special was in the air.

Mayall's Bluesbreakers didn't tour, exactly; they simply played six or seven nights a week as a matter of course. "We were paid £35 a week," Clapton recalled. "It was a set wage no matter how much work you did. The idea was that you would play a gig, and when you were done you might have to play again that night. A not un-typical night might involve travelling up to Sheffield to play the evening gig at eight o'clock, then heading off to Manchester to play the all-nighter, followed by driving back to London and being dropped off at Charing Cross station at six in the morning."

It is not altogether clear when the graffiti proclaiming that "Clapton is God" started to appear on the streets of London. But the equipment overhaul and the intense gigging schedule had clearly elevated the guitarist into an exalted zone as a performer. There is a live recording of the Bluesbreakers playing "Call It Stormy Monday" at the Flamingo Club on March 17, 1966 — two weeks before Clapton's 21st birthday and

a month before the *Beano* album was recorded — that has been hailed by several commentators as one of the best blues guitar solos ever. Clapton's tone, along with the outrageous timing and aggressive phrasing on this recording, is little short of supernatural. Nashville guitar great Kenny Vaughan [*Marty Stuart & His Fabulous Superlatives*] spoke for many when he called it "just the most wicked-ass... frantic, most intense guitar solo you ever heard on a blues in your life."

It sounds phenomenal in every department — even today. But imagine how it must have sounded to the guy who had just wandered into the bohemian neighborhood of nightclubs, strip joints and coffee bars on Wardour Street in 1966 and happened to hear that solo. It must have been like hearing music from another planet.

Against the odds, the *Beano* album caught something of the thrill of that moment in time, making it one of the most successful exercises in the art of capturing lightning in a bottle yet undertaken in the modern recording era.

"We went into the Decca studios in West Hampstead for three days in April [*1966*] and played exactly the set we did on stage, with the addition of a horn section on some of the tracks," Clapton said. "Because the album was recorded so quickly, it had a raw, edgy quality about it which made it special. It was almost like a live performance. I insisted on having the mic exactly where I wanted it to be during the recording, which was not too close to my amplifier, so that I could play through it and get the same sound as I had on stage."

That was all very well for Clapton. But for producer Mike Vernon and engineer Gus Dudgeon, it wasn't quite that simple, as Mayall recounted in his 2019 autobiography. "I recall that the engineer, Gus Dudgeon, was horrified that Eric was intending to play through his Marshall amp at full volume," Mayall said. "This simply wasn't the acceptable way to do things in 1966. However, Eric stood his ground, refusing to turn his amp down. Mike Vernon had to mediate in order for us to start."

"It took a while to get a sound that everybody was happy with, especially Eric, but everybody had to take on board that we were going into an unknown era," Vernon told Harry Shapiro in 2011. "Nobody in Decca studios had ever witnessed somebody coming into the studio, setting up their guitar and amp and playing at that volume. People in the canteen behind the studio were complaining about the noise. Normally they'd never hear it, but this was travelling around the studio complex. People were saying, 'What the bloody hell is that?!' and coming to see what was going on."

The resulting album — *Blues Breakers with Eric Clapton* by John Mayall — marked Year Zero for the modern electric guitar sound. Clapton's tone was nothing short of revolutionary and, harnessed to the skill and visceral emotional quality of his solos (especially on slow numbers "Have You Heard" and "Double Crossing Time"), produced an effect of a different magnitude to anything that had gone before. Kudos to Mayall for assembling a great collection of new and traditional blues songs and stamping his singular English mark on them. And respect to the fine rhythm section of John McVie (bass) and Hughie Flint (drums). But this album was all about Clapton using his Gibson/Marshall setup to redefine the sonic and technical norms of electric guitar playing.

Blues Breakers with Eric Clapton ushered in a new era, not just in the playing of music but also the marketing of it. It was released July 22, 1966, with little fanfare and promptly rose to Number 6 in the U.K. albums chart. This was unheard of for an act that had enjoyed no previous success in the singles chart, and its unexpected yet emphatic progress was a key moment in the process whereby albums started to take over from singles as the barometer of a band's success.

With its revolutionary guitar sound and compelling spiritual vigor derived from the musicians' deep love and knowledge of American blues forms, the impact of the album was seismic on many levels. A generation of guitarists received the wake-up call of their careers, and within a year the British Blues Boom would be in full swing. More than that, it was effectively the first "rock" album.

"When we heard the *Beano* album, that was like... Nobody had ever heard a guitar sound like that," Kenny Vaughan said. "Johnny 'Guitar' Watson records from the 1950s had some wicked-ass sounds. And, of course, Guitar Slim and Earl King — they both had great sounds. And Link Wray had a brash, rude sound. But they weren't like that. Nobody had that Eric Clapton sound on that record."

Nobody had it — and now everybody wanted it. Unfortunately for Mayall, by the time the *Beano* album was released, Clapton had already left the group. Ever the pragmatist, Mayall immediately recruited Peter Green to replace him and continued his eight-days-a-week schedule playing to ever-expanding audiences. Clapton, meanwhile, had embarked on another project that would further define the role of the modern guitar hero and redraw the boundaries of the rock genre he had already done so much to invent.

Cream were the first power/guitar trio and the first group of any kind to bring a flamboyantly virtuoso musical technique to bear on the traditionally basic structures of popular music. Drummer Ginger Baker and bass player/vocalist/harmonica man Jack Bruce were highly evolved musicians with backgrounds in jazz,

A GENERATION OF GUITARISTS RECEIVED THE WAKE-UP CALL OF THEIR CAREERS, AND WITHIN A YEAR, THE BRITISH BLUES BOOM WOULD BE IN FULL SWING

where the impulse to experiment and improvise at length was taken as part of the basic motivation for performing. To play with musicians like these gave Clapton an opportunity to deploy his technique to its full extent and explore musical avenues that took him far beyond the confines of performing in a regular band. Cream were a short-lived and volatile combination of individuals, but it's worth remembering the spirit of optimism that brought the group together. "Musically we are idealistic," Clapton told Penny Valentine in July 1967. "When I first met Ginger and Jack I realized they were the only two musicians I could ever play with."

Cream played their first gig at the Twisted Wheel in Manchester on July 29, 1966, the night before England won the World Cup, and the trio's first album, *Fresh Cream*, was released just five months later on December 9. The chronology of the 1960s gets a bit hazy after all this time, but it is worth noting that Jimi Hendrix released his first single, "Hey Joe," one week *after Fresh Cream*. Indeed, when Hendrix's manager Chas Chandler was trying to persuade Hendrix to move from New York to London, one of Chan-

MARK AND COLLEEN HAYWARD/REDFERNS

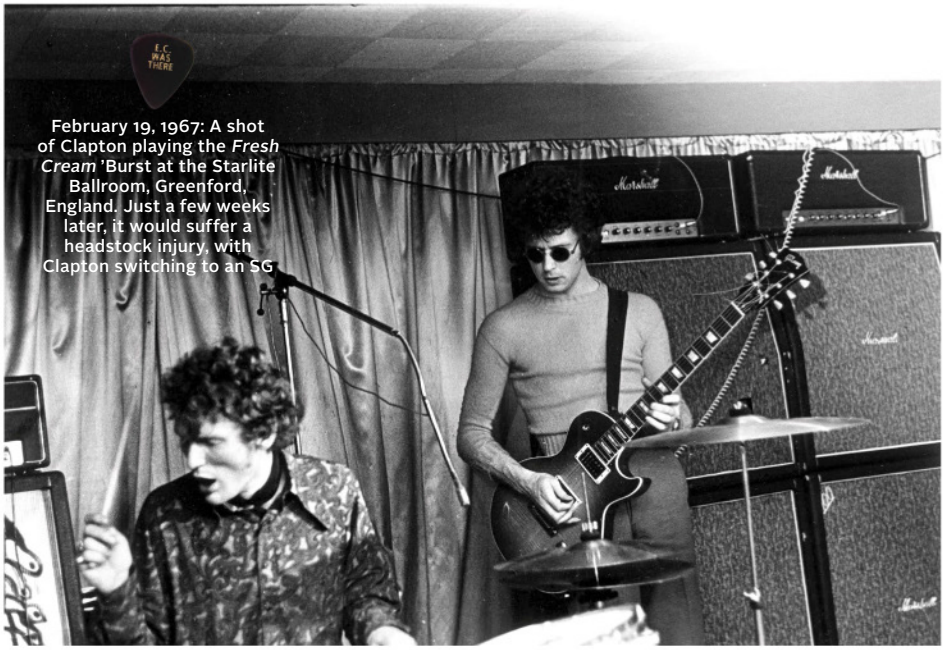
Cream perform "I Feel Free," a *Fresh Cream* track, on *Top of the Pops* in London, January 25, 1967; [*from left*] Jack Bruce (playing a Fender Bass VI), Ginger Baker and Clapton (playing what is commonly called the *Fresh Cream* 'Burst)

dler's key bargaining chips was to promise that once they were in London, he would arrange for Hendrix to see his hero, Eric Clapton, playing with Cream. It was perhaps no coincidence that Hendrix also elected to form a trio as opposed to a conventional four-man band on his arrival in London.

With *Fresh Cream*, Clapton further extended the range of sounds and musical sensibilities available to the modern guitar hero. On "Sweet Wine," he constructed a latticework of interlocking guitar lines — some of them little more than wails of feedback, others hauntingly melodic — to create a passage that was more of a soundscape than a guitar solo. He developed an extraordinary sense of narrative in his solos — which even on the extemporized blues rumble of "Spoonful" or the two-chord chant of "I'm So Glad" seemed to hang together as if they were totally spontaneous and carefully structured at the same time.

As they toured America, the trio's facility for improvising around a commonly understood framework became ever more finely developed. They played many times at the Fillmore Auditorium in San Francisco, where promoter Bill Graham gave them *carte blanche* to play for as long and as loud as they liked, even if the show went on until dawn the next day.

"It was very liberating," Clapton recalled. "We'd go off in our own directions, but sometimes we would hit these coincidental points... and we would jam on it for a little while



February 19, 1967: A shot of Clapton playing the *Fresh Cream* 'Burst at the Starlite Ballroom, Greenford, England. Just a few weeks later, it would suffer a headstock injury, with Clapton switching to an SG

and then go back into our own thing. I had never experienced anything like it. It was nothing to do with lyrics or ideas; it was much deeper, something purely musical. We were at our peak during that period."

This semi-improvised approach led to one of the most celebrated guitar solos of all time, in the shape of the comparatively concise and structured live version of "Crossroads" recorded on March 10, 1968, on a mobile studio parked outside the group's gig at the 5,400-capacity Winterland Ballroom in San Francisco, and first presented to the wider world as the opening track on the live disc of the double-album *Wheels of Fire*, released on August 9 of that year in the U.K. (June 14 in the U.S.).

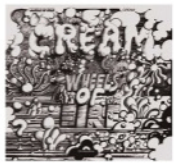
Clapton's phrasing, timing and choice of notes on this version was sensational, as he started in a low register and gradually climbed over two verses building tension and excitement. After another verse of vocals ("Going down to Rosedale..."), he came back in for a second stretch of solos, doubling the intensity in all departments for another three verses. Never repeating himself or losing his way through the intense three-way wrestling match going on between the guitar, bass and drums, he pulled out a succession of soaring blues licks and double-stop bends to create a thrilling climax that was both super-aggressive and intensely focused. In the many polls, lists and tabulations of Clapton's greatest guitar solos, this is the one that invariably comes out at the top.

Surprisingly, by modern standards, all the sound of the guitar (and the bass, for that matter) at Cream's shows was generated from the back line. None of the speakers for the instruments was miked up and put through the PA, even in venues of 5,000 capacity or more. The PA systems of the time were still unbelievably rudimentary; a couple of WEM columns or a Marshall 200-watt system for the vocal mics and maybe a couple of overhead mics for the drums was considered sufficient for a gig at the Royal Albert Hall in London.

The incredible sound that Clapton got with Cream (as with Mayall before that) was a function of the outrageous volume at which he played his Gibsons, which were usually either the 1964 SG Standard affectionately known as "The Fool," a '63/'65 one-pickup Firebird I or a '64 ES-335. He generally used two 100-watt Marshall stacks, each comprising a model 1959 100-watt head, a model 1960 angled 4x12 cabinet and a model 1960B flat-fronted 4x12 cabinet. "I set them full on everything," Clapton told *Rolling Stone* in 1967. "Full treble, full bass and full presence, same with the controls on the guitar. If you've got the amp and guitar full, there is so much volume that you can get it 100 miles away and it's going to feedback — the sustaining effect — and anywhere in the vicinity it's going to feedback."

Clapton gradually introduced various pedals into his setup. He was the first "name" guitarist to release a track featuring a wah pedal — the Vox V846 (later reissued as the Clyde McCoy) — which he used on "Tales of Brave Ulysses," released as a U.K. B-side to "Strange Brew" in June 1967. Although Hendrix ultimately made much more extensive use of the wah and did far more to popularize it, his first use of the pedal wasn't heard on record until "Burning of the Midnight Lamp," a U.K. single released in August 1967. Clapton also used a Dallas Arbiter Fuzz Face, notably to beef up the iconic riff of "Sunshine of Your Love" and to add extra saturation and sustain to his sound on "White Room" and others. He used other pedals and effects — including the revolving (Leslie) speaker sound heard on "Badge" — but often his amp and guitar settings, combined with his extraordinary touch, were all it took to generate a specific sound, such as the high, pure "woman" tone he conjured on "Outside Woman Blues" and others.

CLAPTON WAS THE FIRST "NAME" GUITARIST TO RELEASE A TRACK FEATURING A WAH PEDAL — THE VOX V846 — WHICH HE USED ON "TALES OF BRAVE ULYSSES"



MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES (LEFT) MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES (RIGHT)

The huge popularity and acclaim that greeted Clapton and Cream inspired a transformation in popular music on many levels. The sheer volume at which they played and the heavy, riff-based style of songwriting they developed paved the way for Black Sabbath and Deep Purple — both founded in 1968 — and the subsequent birth of heavy metal. And Cream's fondness for improvising unleashed a tsunami of extended jamming among the heroes of the heavy rock genre they had done so much to create. It's hardly an exaggeration to say that by their example Cream transformed a concert and record industry previously dominated by the three- or four-minute song structure into a world where long-form improvisation and instrumental free-for-alls became commonplace, if not the norm.

Hendrix certainly took it as the model for his live performances, as did Led Zeppelin — who, of course, started life as the New Yardbirds and thereby carried forward the legacy of the original Clapton rave-ups that got the ball rolling in the first place. And over the next few

BONAMASSA'S PICKS

JOE CHOOSES SOME UNDERAPPRECIATED '60S CLAPTON GEMS

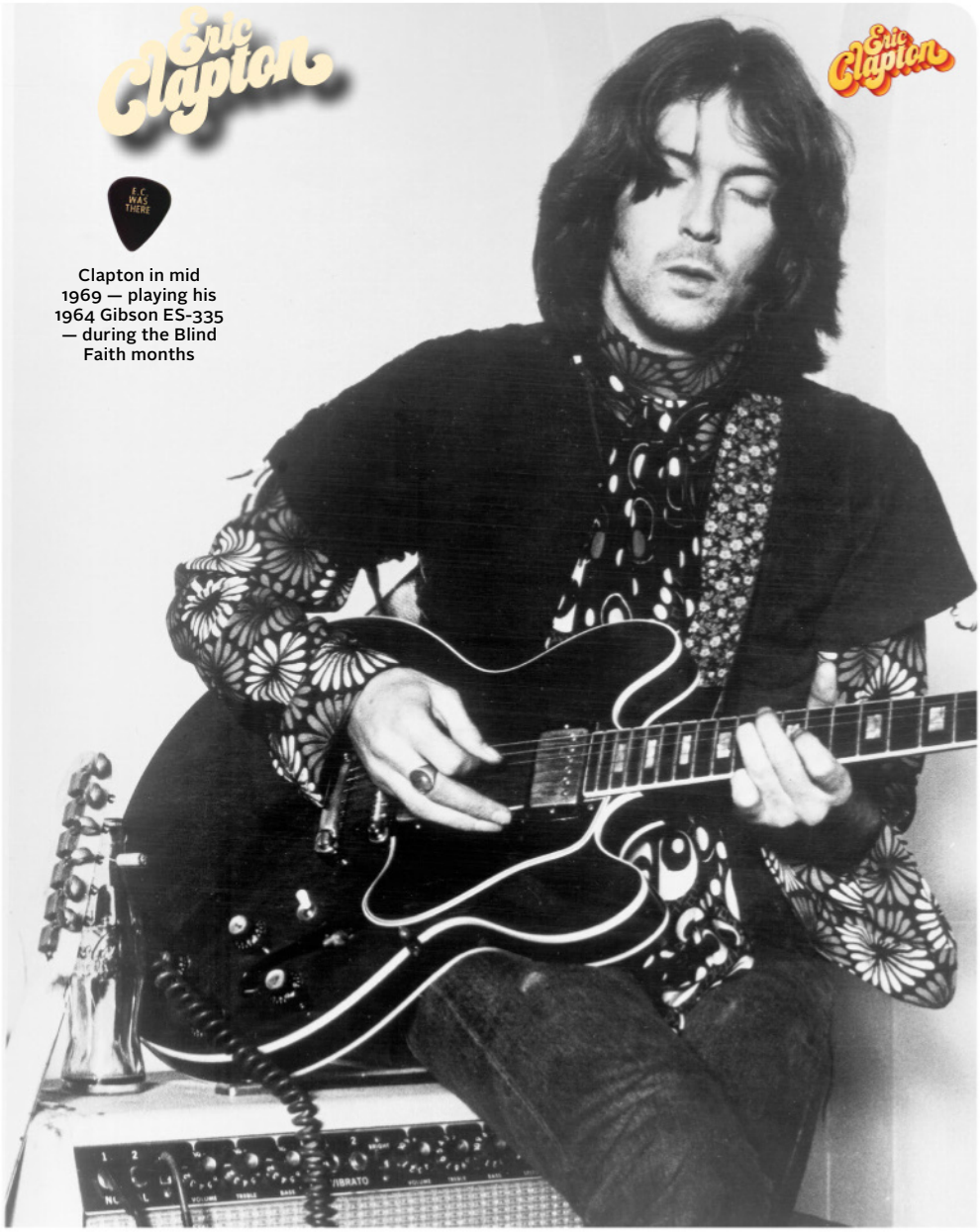
"DOUBLE CROSSING TIME" FROM *BLUES BREAKERS WITH ERIC CLAPTON* (1966)

THERE'S ONE SONG that I feel is overlooked from the Bluesbreakers record — "Double Crossing Time." It's like this slow blues, and it's so damn devastating. Obviously, that album has a lot of cover songs, but that doesn't matter, you know? The fact remains that it changed the game and re-did the landscape as far as electric blues. You cannot deny that. That was especially true for people in the U.S. when they — like me — began their adventure through the blues via London Records. But that was the one record and the one song that really got me. I heard that and said, "Oh, my God, just wow." And it's the sound I'm still forever chasing. We all are.

"DESERTED CITIES OF THE HEART" FROM *WHEELS OF FIRE* (1968)

ONE SONG YOU never hear being talked about is Cream's "Deserted Cities of the Heart." I really do think it was one of their best, and it's very overlooked. Clapton had this kind of sitar sound happening on the guitar solo, which was so cool. And the way Jack [*Bruce*] kinda screamed like James Brown, where he got really deep, was memorable. This song is just a cool psychedelic rock classic you never hear people mention. You always heard about "White Room," "Sunshine of Your Love" and "Crossroads," but for me, this song was an instant classic.

— Interview by Andrew Daly



Clapton in mid 1969 — playing his 1964 Gibson ES-335 — during the Blind Faith months

years bands such as Ten Years After (at Woodstock), Mountain, Humble Pie and many others piled in with ever more extravagant performances that trod an increasingly erratic line between grand musical visions and wanton grandiloquence. In 1968 Canned Heat filled two sides of their double-album *Living the Blues* with one track, "Refried Boogie," a 40-minute epic of non-stop noodling and nebulosity.

It all got to be a bit too much for Clapton. He was particularly affected by a negative review of a Cream show in *Rolling Stone* by Jon Landau, who described the band as "three virtuosos romping through their bag... always in a one-dimensional style" and Clapton as "a master of the blues clichés of all of the post-World War II blues guitarists."

"And it was true!" Clapton said later. "The ring of truth just knocked me backward."

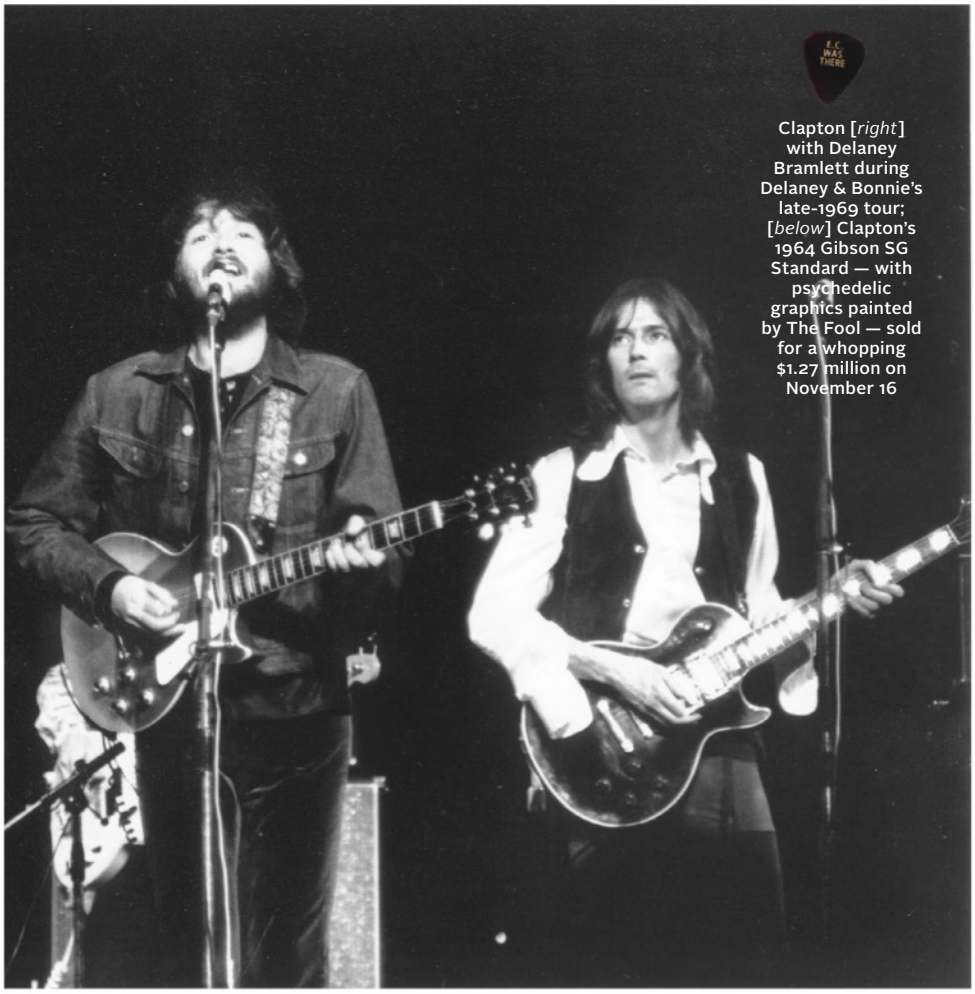
By that point, Clapton had been performing for many years at a level of intensity that had become impossible to maintain. There was an emotional cost to digging so deep into his reserves of musical creativity night after night, not to mention the physical toll of doing so at such punishingly high volumes.

"When you're in your mid-20s you've got something that you lose," Clapton reflected in an interview with *Q* magazine in 1986. "If I was a sportsman I would have retired by now. You've just got a certain amount of dynamism that you lose when you turn 30. You have to accept that otherwise you're chasing a dream."

Looking back on that period much later, he recalled that, "There were times too when, playing to audiences who were only too happy to worship us, complacency set in. I began to be quite ashamed of being in Cream, because I thought it was a con. Musically I was fed up with the virtuoso thing. Our gigs had become nothing more than an excuse for us to show off as individuals, and any sense of unity we might have had when we started out seemed to have gone out of the window."

Clapton made one last roll of the guitar hero dice with the ill-fated supergroup Blind Faith, which came into being, recorded and released a U.S. and U.K. chart-top-

CHECK OUT THE RECORDING OF EDDIE VAN HALEN CONJURING A NOTE-PERFECT RECREATION OF CLAPTON'S "CROSSROADS" SOLO DURING A 1984 RADIO SHOW



Clapton [*right*] with Delaney Bramlett during Delaney & Bonnie's late-1969 tour; [*below*] Clapton's 1964 Gibson SG Standard — with psychedelic graphics painted by The Fool — sold for a whopping $1.27 million on November 16

ping album, headlined a massive show in Hyde Park, toured in Scandinavia and America and then split up — all between January and August 1969.

"I think just playing the guitar isn't enough," Clapton told *Rolling Stone* the following year. "If I was a great songwriter or a great singer, then I wouldn't be so humble about it. I wouldn't be shy."

So saying, Clapton very firmly stepped down from the pedestal onto which he had been placed and turned his back on the world of rock virtuoso superstars he had been instrumental in creating. He (along with George Harrison) instead joined forces with Delaney & Bonnie Bramlett, a husband-and-wife duo from Los Angeles whose loose-knit band had supported Blind Faith on their tour of America. Delaney & Bonnie's soulful blend of Southern rock, blues and gospel music was a soothing balm to Clapton's troubled spirit.

"You really have to start singing, and you ought to be leading your own band," Delaney told Clapton. "God has given you this gift, and if you don't use it he will take it away." Clapton took Delaney's advice to heart, and his subsequent campaign since the 1970s to reinvent himself has been so successful that as far as many casual observers of the rock world today are concerned, he is now regarded as a singer who also plays a bit of guitar.

And yet the influence that Clapton had, whether directly or indirectly, on just about every electric guitarist who followed him is undeniable. Just listen to Mick Taylor playing "Snowy Wood" on the Bluesbreakers' 1967 album *Crusade*. Or check out the incredible off-the-cuff recording of Eddie Van Halen conjuring a note-perfect recreation of Clapton's solo from "Crossroads" during a 1984 radio show called *The Inside Track*.

Then there's John Mayer's emotionally charged playing (and soulful singing) on "Gravity." Mayer once described Eric Clapton as his "musical father" and has often performed "Crossroads" in his live shows, while many latter-day guitarists ranging from Joe Bonamassa to Gary Clark Jr. have testified to Clapton's towering influence on their playing.

"Cream explored the outer reaches that three players could accomplish," said Billy Gibbons of ZZ Top, another trio that emerged from under the long shadow of Clapton, Bruce and Baker. Gibbons nominated *Fresh Cream* as one of the albums that changed his life, no less, delivering his verdict on the group's sound with a typical Texas flourish: "Killer tones." GW

With thanks to Geoff Peel, London.

NIGEL OSBOURNE/REDFERNS (LEFT) CHRIS WALTER/WIRE IMAGE (RIGHT)

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SLOWHAND IN THE '70s

GIVE ME STRENGTH

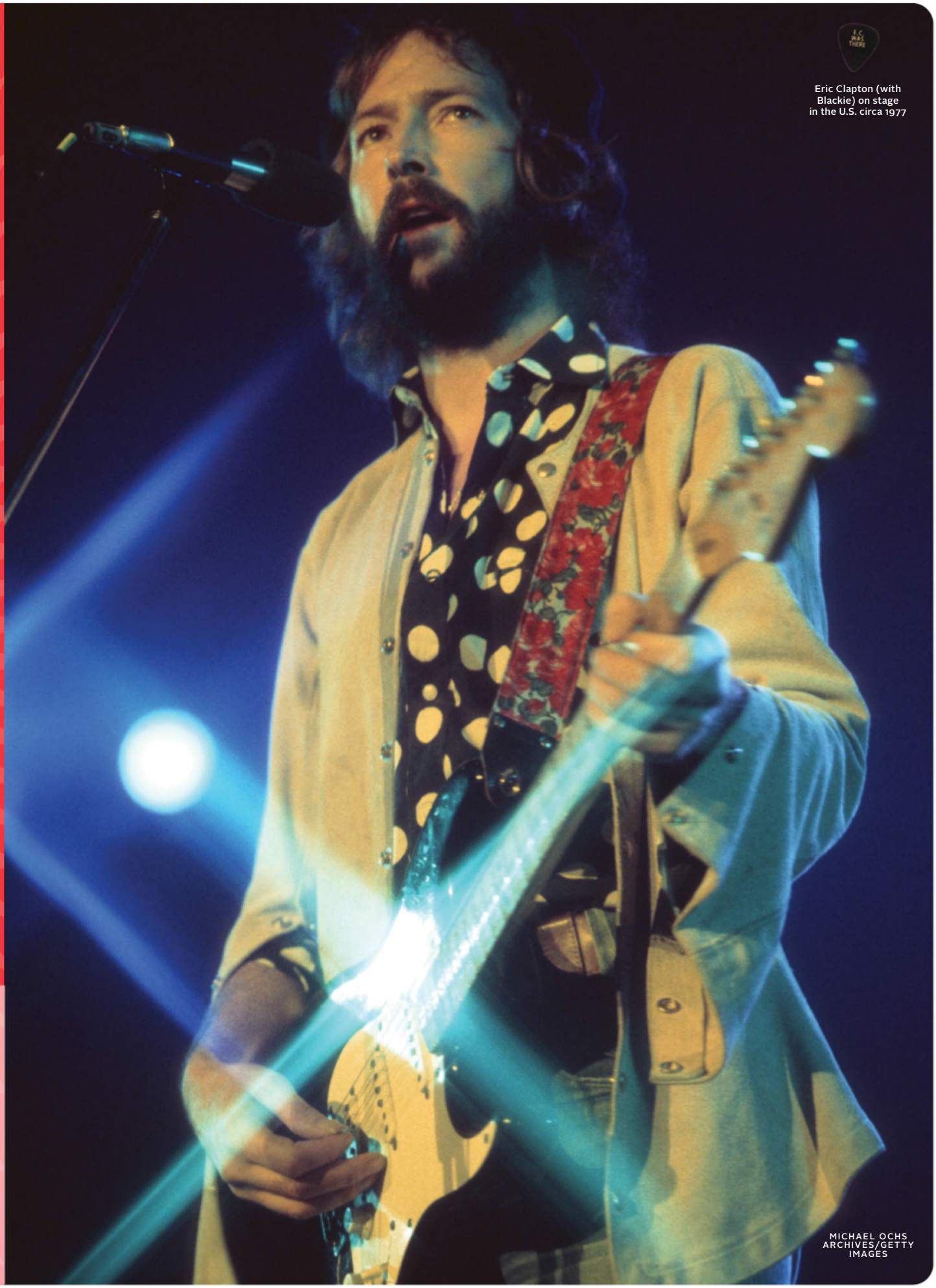
Eric Clapton PUTS ASIDE HIS GUITAR HEROICS, WEATHERS DRUG AND DRINK ADDICTIONS AND DEVELOPS A DEEPER, MORE WELL-ROUNDED ARTISTRY

By BILL DeMAIN

IN LATE 1968, Eric Clapton and Steve Winwood had a conversation that would help define Clapton's direction in the coming decade. "We discussed the philosophy of what we wanted to do," Clapton recalled in his autobiography. "Steve said that for him, it was all about *unskilled labor*, where you just played with your friends and fit the music around that. It was the opposite of virtuosity, and it rang a bell with me because I was trying so hard to escape the pseudo-virtuoso image I had helped create for myself."

Indeed, Clapton's Sixties hadn't been so much swinging as swashbuckling. From the Yardbirds to the Bluesbreakers to Cream to Blind Faith, he leapt from band to band, wielding Teles, Les Pauls, SGs and 335s, while fanatics with spray-paint cans started a new three-word graffiti gospel across England — "Clapton is God." In the final days of Cream, the by-then reluctant messiah's go-to escape for sanity was the Band's 1968 debut album, *Music from Big Pink*. That, and the music of J.J. Cale, with its understatement, groove and economy, became stylistic templates for Clapton, as did a brief tour in 1969 with Delaney & Bonnie, who encouraged him to focus on his singing and songwriting.

So began the transition from 'God' to 'good all-rounder.'



Eric Clapton (with Blackie) on stage in the U.S. circa 1977

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

Of course, it wasn't just musical influences that were shaping him. He came into the decade with a developing addiction to heroin, which — after his first solo album — became so debilitating that it sidelined him for two and a half years. When he finally managed to get clean, it was only to trade one dependency for another; to read the chapters about the Seventies in Clapton's autobiography is to almost feel contact drunkenness, so prevalent was his boozing. But like many alcoholics, he was high-functioning, and he continued to tour and make records.

What follows is a roundup of those records and key moments, along with conversations with a few supporting players who were integral to Clapton's Seventies.

ERIC CLAPTON (1970)

OPENING SONGS SAY so much. Released in August 1970, *Eric Clapton*, his first solo album, could have rung in the new decade with the heralding guitar chime of "Let It Rain," the big brass gallop of "After Midnight" or the kicked-down doors of Leon Russell's "Blues Power." Instead, he chose to slunk into the 11-song sequence with a funky instrumental jam called, well, "Slunky." Led by Bobby Keys' sax, it's a minute-and-a-half before Clapton's guitar appears, and even then, he's mostly just idling on one note with wrist-shaking vibrato and repeating a six-note blues lick... So, what's the message here? It's very much about subverting, then redefining, Clapton's guitar hero status. As he put it to *Circus*, "Until I'm either a great songwriter or a great singer, I shall carry on being embarrassed when people come on with that praise stuff about my guitar solos."

To that end, this album really does make a steady move forward on those fronts. The lilting "Easy Now," with its falsetto break melody and major-to-minor shifts, is an obvious nod to George Harrison (big strumming courtesy of "Ivan the Terrible," Clapton's beloved custom-made Tony Zemaitis 12-string). "Bottle of Red Wine" shuffles with searing, less-is-more blues licks. "Lonesome and a Long Way from Home" features one of Clapton's most soulful, confident vocals. And even though he'd later complain that his voice sounded "too young" on this record, he strikes a balance between the grit and laid-back phrasing that would define his style.

LAYLA AND OTHER ASSORTED LOVE SONGS (1970)

RELEASED JUST THREE months after his self-titled debut, Derek and the Dominos' *Layla and Other Assorted Love Songs* marked the last of the five legendary bands that Clapton would join or lead before officially going solo.

With classics like the title track, "Why Does Love Got to Be So Sad," "Bell Bottom Blues" and his blazing cover of Freddie King's "Have You Ever Loved a Woman," the record was an exorcism for Clapton, working through his tortured love for Pattie Boyd, the wife of George Harrison. Because Clapton's name and image was absent from the sleeve (the label later added stickers explaining that "Derek is Eric!"), the record initially didn't sell.

FRIENDLY GUNSLINGERS: AN INTERVIEW WITH CHUCK KIRKPATRICK

ENGINEER CHUCK KIRKPATRICK — one of the last surviving members of the team behind *Layla and Other Assorted Love Songs* — spoke to us about his impressions of Clapton's playing and his "friendly gunslinger" competition with Duane Allman.

What was your impression of Eric Clapton in 1970?

From day one, he just wanted to play the blues, in a pure sense. He was trying to escape all that "Clapton is God" stuff. He just wanted to be in a band. Because he was the most famous, he was the bandleader. But he didn't dictate.

How did Eric and Duane meet?

We all went to see the Allman Brothers perform in Miami, and afterwards, Eric invited Duane back to Criteria Studios. At midnight, Duane walks in. Moments later, they were sitting down with guitars, laughing and trading licks.

Were they competitive?

Well, I remember the session for "Why Does Love Got to Be So Sad?" Duane and Eric came in to overdub solos. Eric went out, while Duane stayed in the control room, and he played a great solo. Then Tom Dowd said, "Now, Duane, you go out there and do one." So Duane played a great solo, came back, and Eric says, "Well, I want to do mine again!" This went on for at least an hour or two. [*Laughs*] It was a gunfight, but a friendly one.

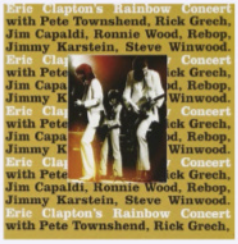
What gear did Clapton use?

His "Brownie" Stratocaster into a Fender Champ. He would crank it all the way up, and that was the sound he liked. It was very easy to record because it really didn't make all that much noise in the room. He also used a blonde Fender Bandmaster for cleaner, fatter rhythm parts. But all the solos are played through the Champ, with no effects.

Did you have the sense during the making of this record that it was going to be as successful as it eventually became?

When it came out, Atlantic either didn't get behind it, or people were confused by the band name. The record didn't take off until a few years later. What I thought then is what I still think — it's one of the greatest guitar records ever made.

1971 TO 1973: I LOOKED AWAY



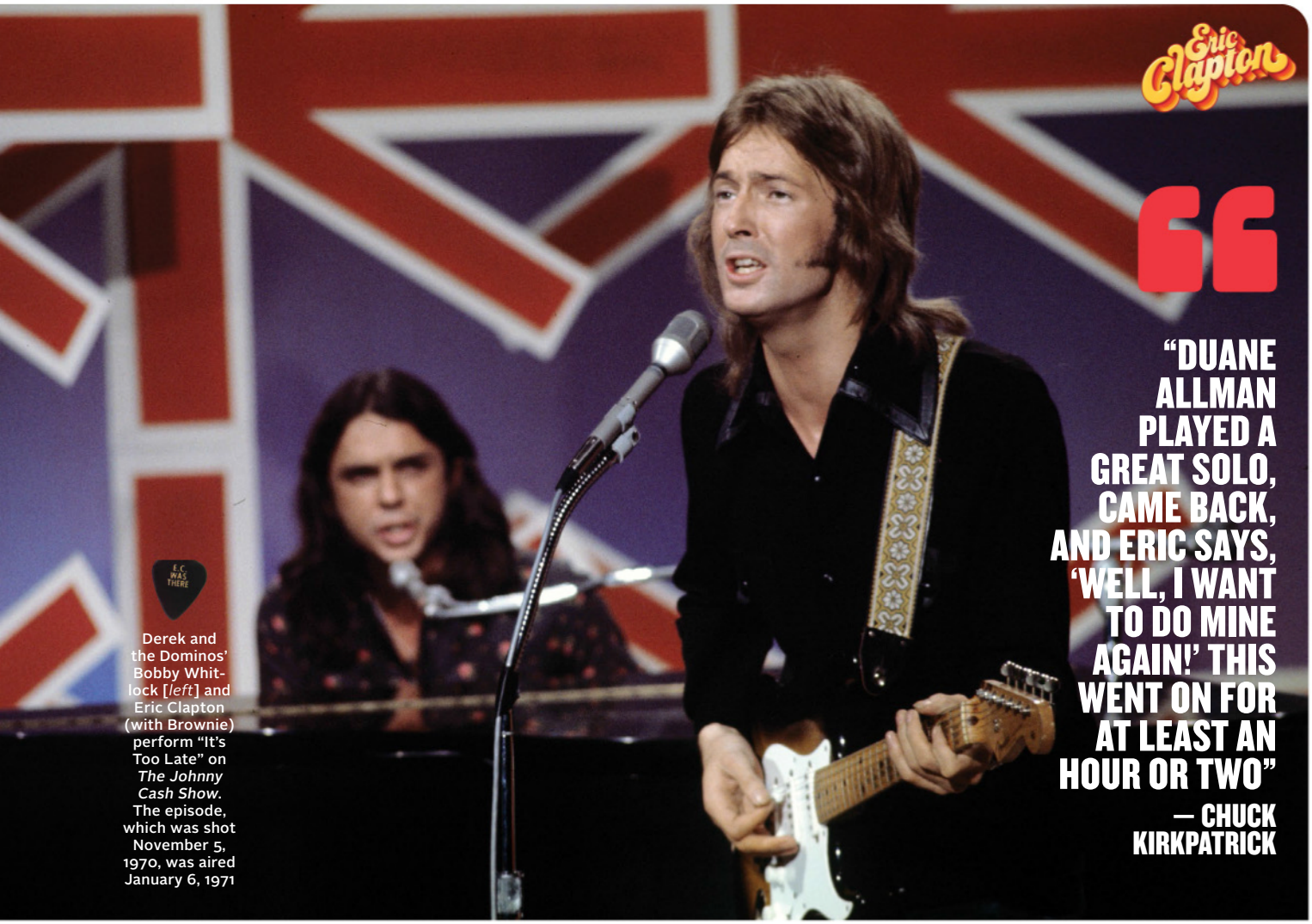
FROM 1971 TO '73, Clapton was in "self-imposed exile," as he slipped deeper into heroin addiction. He admitted that, initially, he was swayed by the drug's romantic mythology, surrounding the lives of musical heroes Charlie Parker and Ray Charles.

"But addiction doesn't negotiate, and it gradually crept up on me, like a fog," Clapton said. He half-heartedly tried clinics and therapies, but mostly spent his days "eating junk food, lying on the couch and watching TV."

His guitar skills atrophied.

There were only two musical interludes during this period — George Harrison's August 1971 Concert for Bangladesh in New York and a January 13, 1973, concert at London's Rainbow Theatre (see photo on page 110), which was basically a rescue mission led by Steve Winwood and Pete Townshend "to prop Eric up and teach him how to play again."

Finally, a stint on the family farm of his then-girlfriend, Alice Ormsby-Gore, helped Clapton "trade isolation for gregarious living" and rediscover the guitar and music. While he admitted that he traded one abusable substance for another, Clapton said he left the farm "fit, clean and buzzing with excitement at the possibilities ahead."



Derek and the Dominos' Bobby Whitlock [*left*] and Eric Clapton (with Brownie) perform "It's Too Late" on *The Johnny Cash Show*. The episode, which was shot November 5, 1970, was aired January 6, 1971

"DUANE ALLMAN PLAYED A GREAT SOLO, CAME BACK, AND ERIC SAYS, 'WELL, I WANT TO DO MINE AGAIN!' THIS WENT ON FOR AT LEAST AN HOUR OR TWO"

— CHUCK KIRKPATRICK

461 OCEAN BOULEVARD (1974)

THE TITLE OF *461 Ocean Boulevard* represents the oceanside Miami address where Clapton started redefining himself musically. At Clapton's request, Derek and the Dominos bassist Carl Radle had put together a core band, including Tulsa-based drummer Jamie Oldaker and pianist Dick Sims. They were joined by local session guitarist George Terry, keyboardist Albhy Galuten and backing vocalist Yvonne Elliman (Mary Magdalene in *Jesus Christ Superstar*) at Criteria, with Tom Dowd in the producer's chair.

For three weeks, working mostly through the wee hours, Clapton and the band jammed on blues covers by Robert Johnson and Willie Dixon and worked up three originals. There were a few extroverted moments, especially on "Mainline Florida" and "Motherless Children," which retooled a 1927 gospel standard into a steamrolling romp. But mostly, the record sustains a slowburn intensity — much influenced by J.J. Cale — especially on "Give Me Strength," "I Can't Hold Out" and the gospel-esque "Let It Grow." The set's surprise hit came via a cover of Bob Marley's "I Shot the Sheriff," which Clapton fought to leave off the record, but which helped make said record a Number 1 platinum-seller. Re-learning to play, his guitar solos are tasteful and simple throughout, more melodic than the "gymnastic playing" he'd come to resist. Clapton said, "I knew I could still play from the heart, and no matter how primitive or sloppy it sounded, it would be real. That was my strength."

THE TURNING POINT: AN INTERVIEW WITH ALBHY GALUTEN

BEST KNOWN FOR co-producing the Bee Gees' *Saturday Night Fever* soundtrack, Albhy Galuten also worked with Diana Ross, Dolly Parton and Jellyfish. Starting as Tom Dowd's assistant on the Derek and the Dominos record, Galuten joined Clapton's studio band as keyboardist for *461 Ocean Boulevard*, remaining part of the team for the rest of the decade. He also co-wrote *Slowhand*'s closing track, "Peaches and Diesel," with Clapton.

Why was *461 Ocean Boulevard* such an important album for Clapton?

When Eric came back, he was clean, more relaxed and done with wanting to be famous. *461* was a turning point. He was leaving the bombast behind him. It was more like, "I just want to play with my friends in a band and make a nice record. We're not going to worry about hits." He even said to me, "If I knew what hits were, then all blues records would be hits." Even though the album is laid-back, there's an intensity to it, and that came out of his history of very emotional situations in his life.

You'd worked with Clapton a few years earlier. How had his guitar playing changed?

When he was younger, I think he was trying to impress people. Then as he got older, he was just trying to play the song. Eric put in his 10,000 hours to get his technique to where it was

DISNEY GENERAL ENTERTAINMENT CONTENT VIA GETTY IMAGES

Eric Clapton and his band in a truly lovely hotel room in 1975 [*clockwise from left*]: drummer Jamie Oldaker, Clapton (holding the bound-headstock Martin), keyboard player Dick Sims, guitarist George Terry, backing vocalists Yvonne Elliman and Marcella Detroit, and bassist Carl Radle

flawless. And then once he let it go, he was like Oscar Peterson or Ella Fitzgerald, where your instrument is second nature. He could play whatever he thought of.

How did you come to write "Peaches and Diesel" with him?
I had this little riff on a guitar and Eric liked it. He was very generous to develop it with me and give me a co-writing credit. But then he's always been that way. Years later, he'd make sure his producers got paid royalties from SoundExchange when most big artists never bothered.

What do you think of those Seventies Clapton albums now?
They stand up — for their realness and their humanity.

And your lasting impression of Eric during that period?
The main thing about Eric is he always loves playing. That's his whole reason for being.

E.C. WAS HERE (1975)

"C'MON, ERIC, DO some Cream!" yelled a disgruntled fan at a show in 1974. Such catcalls weren't uncommon in the Seventies, and they got under Clapton's skin.

Clapton admitted that his 1975 live album, *E.C. Was Here,* was a way of "filling that space that people were complaining about." Of the six tracks, four are straight-ahead blues, and the other two from Blind Faith. Most top out over seven minutes long. Robert Johnson's "Rambling On My Mind," more than any, proved that Clapton was still an inspired architect. For three-and-half minutes, over four separate key modulations, Clapton leans into Blackie with deep bends and a fiery abandon that recalls the Bluesbreakers' "Beano" album from nine years earlier.

THERE'S ONE IN EVERY CROWD (1975)

CLAPTON WANTED TO call *461's* sequel *E.C. Is God: There's One in Every Crowd*, but his label failed to see the humor. Returning to Miami's Criteria Studio with the same creative team and his road band well-tightened would have seemed to ensure success. But despite a couple of memorable songs — the sinewy "Singin' the Blues" and the buoyant, Allmans-like "High," with Clapton and George Terry on tandem leads — the material doesn't measure up. Both "Swing Low Sweet Chariot" and "Don't Blame Me" try to replicate the reggae vibe of "I Shot the Sheriff," while "Opposites" and "Better Make It Through Today" meander without quite arriving.

NO REASON TO CRY (1976)

CLAPTON TOLD *CRAWDADDY* in 1975, "I think I've explored the possibilities of that laid-back feel. The next studio album will be stronger, with stage numbers."

And was it? Well, sort of. Upping stakes to the West Coast of the U.S.A., *No Reason to Cry* included a sprawling cast of contributors, including Bob

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES (ABOVE, BOTH PHOTOS)

Clapton — holding a cassette — and Pattie Boyd on board a private jet in or near the U.S. in 1978

[*right*] Clapton with Don Willams

Dylan, Ronnie Wood, Billy Preston and the Band. But Clapton didn't leave much room for himself, sounding more like a guest than the confident leader (his bandmates called him "Captain Clapton") he was on the previous two albums. On the Dylan-penned "Sign Language," the two share lead vocals, though it sounds like neither claims the mic; meanwhile, the Band's Robbie Robertson plays the (bizarre) guitar solo while his Band-mate, Rick Danko, sings lead on "All Our Past Times." Newcomer vocalist Marcy Levy gets the most spotlight here, doing her best Linda Ronstadt on "Innocent Times" and "Hungry." Overall, it's an album that goes by pleasantly enough, but hardly invites repeated listens.

SLOWHAND (1977)

THE FRONT-LOADED *Slowhand* is the purest distillation of everything Clapton was aiming for in the Seventies. His spirit guide, J.J. Cale, resides in the cover of "Cocaine" and the slippery country-blues groove of "Lay Down Sally," Clapton's highest-charting single of the decade. And there's the happy-ever-after sequel to "Layla," the gentle "Wonderful Night." Apparently written in frustration while he was waiting for Pattie Boyd to get dressed for a party, Clapton delivers it in dewy tones, both vocally and with his Strat. As a contrast to the lean economy of Side 1, polished by new producer Glyn Johns, Clapton stretches out for "The Core," an eight-minute response to all those frustrated fans who missed his extended solos. The other highlight is John Martyn's "May You Never," which is one of Clapton's warmest, most affecting vocals from any of his albums. Glyn Johns wrote in his autobiography, "It was like falling off a log working with this lot. Because they had been on the road for a few weeks, Eric and the band were in great form. There [*was*] a camaraderie between them socially as well as musically, Eric's sense of humor leading the way."

BACKLESS (1978)

"FOR MOST OF the Seventies, I was content to lie back and do what I had to do with the least amount of effort," Clapton said. "I was very grateful to be alive." Clapton's final studio album of the decade, *Backless*, brims with that feeling as it returns to the winning formula of *Slowhand*, with Glyn Johns producing 10 easy-to-like songs. There's a J.J. Cale cover ("I'll Make Love to You Anytime"), a Marcy Levy duet ("Roll It"), a "Lay Down Sally" sequel ("Watch Out for Lucy"), two Dylan tunes and an eight-minute traditional blues that gives Clapton and George Terry room to stretch out on solos ("Early in the Morning"). But it's the final song that's most memorable, a rocking tribute to the musical city that influenced so much of Clapton's Seventies work — "Tulsa Time."

WHEN E.C. WAS LIVIN' ON TULSA TIME

IN 1978, NASHVILLE-based songwriter Danny Flowers was playing guitar on the road with country star Don Williams. The band had a night off in Tulsa. "It was the middle of blizzard, and I wrote 'Tulsa Time,' in about 30 minutes in my hotel room while watching *The Rockford Files* — like you do," Flowers says with a laugh. "I was thinking about my musician friends who lived there — Jamie Oldaker and Dick Sims, who played with Eric — and the vibe of the place."

The next day, at a rehearsal, the band started working up Flowers' new song. Williams heard it and loved it. Flowers says, "He said, 'Get me the lyric, I want to record it.'" A week later, they were opening a concert for Clapton in Nashville. Flowers says, "Eric used to come to our shows and was a big fan of Don's." Afterwards, Flowers was hanging out with Williams in Clapton's hotel room.

"We were playing guitars, and Don says, 'Danny, play that new song.' So I'm doing it, and Don's playing rhythm and Eric's playing Dobro. I thought I'd died and gone to heaven. When I got through, Eric said, 'I love that song and I want to record it right away.' Don said, 'No, you can't record it. It's mine!' They were play-arguing. I said, 'If you're gonna fight, I'm not gonna let either one of you have it.'"

A few months later, Flowers bought a copy of *Backless*. "And there it was, my name on the back of a Clapton album," he says. "It was a beautiful thing."

Knowing that much of Clapton's music in the Seventies felt like a tribute to Tulsa's J.J. Cale, Flowers says, "One of the biggest compliments I ever got about 'Tulsa Time' was somebody who knew J.J. asked him if he had written that song, and he said, 'No, but I wish I had!'" GW

HULTON-DEUTSCH COLLECTION/CORBIS/CORBIS VIA GETTY IMAGES (FAR RIGHT)

SLOWHAND IN THE '70S

PRESENCE OF THE KRAMER

LEGENDARY PRODUCER/ENGINEER EDDIE KRAMER DISCUSSES THE RECORDING OF DEREK AND THE DOMINOS' OFTEN OVERLOOKED LIVE ALBUM, *IN CONCERT*

By ANDREW DALY

FEW PRODUCERS/ENGINEERS have affected guitar music in the way Eddie Kramer has. Having worked with Jimi Hendrix, Jimmy Page, Ace Frehley and Buddy Guy (and that's just the tip of the iceberg), Kramer has long had a bead on all things six-string.

But looking beyond the studio — which accounts for an expansive list of albums — Kramer's deepest impact may well be on the live side of things, which features classics like Kiss' *Alive!*, Led Zeppelin's *The Song Remains the Same* and Derek and the Dominos' *In Concert*. The double live album, which was released in January 1973 (two years after the band's breakup), was not only a brilliant 89 minutes and 45 seconds of blues-rocking, jam-banding, guitar-driven glory by way of Eric Clapton, but actually a favorite of Kramer's, despite its status as a relatively deep cut within Clapton's hefty discography.

"That album doesn't get enough attention," Kramer says. "But it should — the performances were amazing," a sentiment with which most serious Clapton fans might very well agree. And yet, when we talk about live records from the Seventies, *In Concert* is rarely mentioned. In fact, when Derek and the Dominos are mentioned at all (like on page 52, for instance), it's usually in the context of their one and only studio album, 1970's *Layla and Other Assorted Love Songs*. But interestingly, going into the two shows at New York City's Fillmore East in October 1970, Kramer hadn't even heard the *Layla* album — not that it mattered, as he had a vision.

"I don't believe I'd heard it," he says. "I hardly had time to breathe in those days; I was so freaking busy jumping from studio to studio that I barely had time to sleep. But I don't think that left me at a disadvantage; I knew I could get a good sound because the Fillmore sounded like a million bucks. All I had to do was ensure that the mics were in the right place and the levels were correct — and to just keep the tape rolling."

Kramer might not have been overly familiar with *Layla and Other Assorted Love Songs*, but he was definitely familiar with Clapton. "Oh, Clapton was respected," Kramer says. "He was admired and loved, just like Hendrix and Page. I loved how Clapton played — as did Jimi, for that matter — so it was a case of being a member of the admiration society. He could play a ballad, but he also had a fantastic tone, which I thought was superb."

And so, when going into Derek and the Dominos' first Fillmore East set, Kramer's directive was simple: take what he knew, get it laid to tape, get a hell of a sound and make a record that captures every bit of on-stage magic.

But how did he get there in the first place?

"As I seem to remember, I got a call from the record company, saying, 'Eric's gonna do this thing, but it's not going under his name, and it's going to be live. Can you record it at the Fillmore East?' Now, the Fillmore East was my second home, and if I wasn't under the stage with the remote recording system, I was out in the alleyway with a recording truck."

That truck, which Kramer specifically refers to as "the Fedco truck," was where he was stationed as Clapton and the band — which included the *Layla* lineup, minus Duane Allman (who was on stage with the Allman Brothers Band, about an hour and a half away from the Lower East Side in Stony Brook, New York, that night) — took the stage. "It was a converted bread van, and man, I loved that little bread van," Kramer says. "It had a great console and great machines. But the cool thing about the Fillmore East was the room, meaning it didn't

A rare photo of Eric Clapton — in Derek and the Dominos mode — at the band's live debut at the Lyceum Theatre, London, June 14, 1970

[*below*] Eddie Kramer mans the mixing desk at Manhattan Center Studio in New York City, March 29, 1994

KOH HASEBE/SHINKO MUSIC/GETTY IMAGES (DEREK) DAVID CORIO/REDFERNS (KRAMER)

matter if bands were playing solo acoustic or as a full-on horn band; the sound in that room was always amazing because the stage was constructed with two layers of oak, which acted like a plenum with great bottom end."

As evidenced by Kramer's recording on that fall evening in 1970, the Fillmore East and the Fedco truck did their job, providing a perfect soundscape for picking up a historical and iconic concert event. Be it the nine-minute-plus rendition of "Why Does Love Got to Be So Sad" — aka one of Clapton's rare outright blues-shred extravaganzas — or the titanous version of "Let It Rain," which punches in at nearly 18 minutes, *In Concert* showcases a star-crossed band firing on all cylinders.

And so, given the magic radiating off the stage that night, it shouldn't come as a surprise that Kramer soaked up reels of tape with relative ease. "All I had to do was put the mics up, add a touch of EQ, and man, I was done," he says. "That performance was so dynamic. And Eric Clapton, man, he has a touch on guitar that few other guitar players have. He has this delicate touch where needed — much like Jimi had — but he can be absolutely roaring when he needs to be. But he's also melodic — and he was that night. He was just wonderful.

"MY MEMORY OF THAT NIGHT GOES BACK TO ME JUST SITTING IN THE TRUCK, LISTENING TO THE SOUNDS BEING PRODUCED AND ENSURING I GOT EVERYTHING I WANTED" — EDDIE KRAMER

"My memory of that night goes back to me just sitting in the truck, listening to the sounds being produced and ensuring I got everything I wanted. As far as me dialing Eric in, he had a different dynamic range than someone like Jimi Hendrix, but it was the same process. Eric had his tone, which was a little softer, and that was a different type of band and not that kind that was screaming in your face."

As for why he continues to love *In Concert* a full 51 years after its release, Kramer keeps it simple, sending us off by saying, "It came out great. The band was great, and the audience had a lot of love for them. The interaction between Eric, the audience and the band was special. Man, they were tight." GW

The front and back of Eric Clapton's main Seventies and early Eighties Strat, Blackie, photographed in 2000

ROBERT KNIGHT ARCHIVE/ REDFERNS

BLACK MAGIC

THE STORY OF ERIC CLAPTON'S ICONIC BLACKIE STRATOCASTER

By CHRIS GILL

ABOUT A DOZEN or so guitars that Eric Clapton played during his career have become icons, including his 1960 Gibson Les Paul Standard "Beano 'Burst," 1964 Gibson SG Standard with psychedelic graphics painted by The Fool, 1956 Fender "Brownie" Stratocaster, 1964 Gibson ES-335, the vintage 1939 Martin 000-42 flattop he used for his 1992 *MTV Unplugged* appearance and various Fender Eric Clapton Signature Stratocasters he used from the late Eighties onward.

However, the one Eric Clapton guitar that is probably the most iconic of them all is the Fifties Stratocaster that he nicknamed "Blackie." This guitar made its public debut in Clapton's hands at his "comeback" show at London's Rainbow Theatre on January 13, 1973, and it remained his faithful companion on stage continuously for the next 12 years, through his 1985 world tour, when the guitarist retired the Strat from action after the tour's completion. As a result, it was his main guitar for a longer continuous period than any single other instrument he has owned. Blackie also appeared on the cover of several of Clapton's best-selling albums, including *Slowhand*, *Backless*, *Just One Night* and *Time Pieces*, cementing its legendary iconic status.

Blackie's story began in late 1970, a few years earlier than its public debut. While Clapton was in Nashville on November 5, 1970, to film a performance with Derek and the Dominos for *The Johnny Cash Show*, he went on a guitar shopping spree before the taping. First, he bought a 1966 Martin 000-28 converted to 45 specs by Mike Longworth from GTR, a shop run by George Gruhn, Tut Taylor and Randy Wood. Still

itching from the guitar-acquisition bug, he wandered around the corner to the Sho-Bud guitar shop owned by pedal steel guitar legend Buddy Emmons.

"Sho-Bud had things like Rickenbackers in the front of the shop going for quite high prices," Clapton recalled. "In the back they had this second-hand department, and there was a row of Stratocasters, almost like clothes on pegs. They were all maple-neck Stratocasters from the Fifties, selling for about $100-$150 each. I bought all of them. I couldn't believe that Strats had sunk so low in public opinion. I felt like I'd stepped into a gold mine."

The reason Clapton felt similar to Howard Carter excavating King Tutankhamun's tomb was that Fifties Fender guitars still remained a rarity across the pond in his British homeland. Clapton and his English guitar-playing acquaintances like Jeff Beck and Jimmy Page all lusted for the maple-neck Fenders they saw on the covers of classic albums by American rock 'n' roll and blues artists as well as in films like *The Girl Can't Help It*. Even though newer Fender models with rosewood necks were becoming more common in the U.K. by 1970, maple-neck Strats, Teles and Esquires from the Fifties were the stuff that dreams were made of.

"I owned this album by Johnny 'Guitar' Watson that had the song 'Gangster of Love' on it (*Johnny 'Guitar' Watson*, King Records, 1963)," Slowhand said. "The cover showed Johnny holding this sunburst Strat with a blonde maple neck. I had never come across a Strat with a maple neck before. All the Strats I had seen in England were like the ones the Shadows played, and they all had rosewood necks. Buddy Holly also played a sunburst Strat with a maple neck, and that became my Holy Grail. Eventually I found Brownie at Sound City in London. Even though I already had Brownie, seeing all of those maple neck Strats at Sho-Bud was like a religious experience."

Clapton took all six of the Strats he bought from Sho-Bud home to England. He gave three of them away as gifts to his friends George Harrison, Pete Townshend and Steve Winwood and kept the other three for himself. After playing the trio for a few weeks, he discovered that he preferred different attributes of each. This inspired him to combine his favorite parts of each into a single instrument.

The neck and neck plate stamped with the serial number 20036 came from a 1957 Strat. The neck featured a very distinct V-shaped profile. "It's the most extreme V on a maple neck that I've found," he said. "It was a beautiful neck and had a lovely feel. It's really refined, like a racer. All you had to do was pick it up and it played itself."

The pickups and pickguard assembly came from another Strat, but the exact year is unknown. Some reports claim that two of the pickups were from the mid Fifties while the other was from 1970, but video shot when Fender's Custom Shop examined Blackie, to painstakingly reproduce it for the Tribute Series Eric Clapton Blackie Stratocaster, shows three identical-looking back plates on the pickups.

"The one thing that Blackie's pickups have that we can never get from new pickups is that in-between tone," Clapton said. "It's the sound you get when you combine the middle and bridge pickups. The sound that I got from that combination on Blackie was one of the greatest sounds you can get out of a Stratocaster."

The alder body came from a 1956 Strat featuring a very rare, original custom black paint job that was done at the Fender factory. The fact that Clapton found such a rare guitar was an act of divine providence. Had Clapton assembled his guitar using a standard sunburst body, the general public may not have been able to tell the difference between it and his Brownie Strat. The black-finished alder body already had a good

amount of wear and tear when Clapton bought the guitar, and it continued to acquire battle scars as a badge of honor in his hands over the years.

"I took the best components from three guitars — the body out of one, the neck of another, the pickups and scratchplate of another — and put them into one," Clapton succinctly summarized. "That's what became Blackie."

After Clapton assembled Blackie in 1970, it became his constant companion in the studio and at concert performances. In addition to the aforementioned albums, he used it to record *461 Ocean Boulevard*, *There's One in Every Crowd*, *E.C. Was Here*, *No Reason to Cry*, *Another Ticket*, *Money and Cigarettes* and *Behind the Sun*. Clapton played Blackie at his most important concerts during this period, including the Band's "Last Waltz" concert on November 25, 1976, at San Francisco's Winterland Ballroom, his performances alongside Freddie King in London and Dallas in 1976, his 1979 North American tour with Muddy Waters, the 1983 A.R.M.S. Charity concerts and tour and the Live Aid concert at Philadelphia's JFK Stadium on July 13, 1985.

Clapton later brought Blackie out of retirement for a rare handful of occasions, including his 1991 Royal Albert Hall concerts and a 1990 Japanese television commercial for Honda, where he was seen in a New York recording studio playing a new guitar solo for "Bad Love."

"Something is just magical about that guitar," Clapton said in his guitar book, *Six String Stories*. "Maybe it's all the tender loving care I've given it over the years. That's probably why I like having second-hand guitars and old vintage guitars. This may sound superstitious, but

you never know who owned a guitar before. That person may have been a master and he may have put something in there. The way the guitar was played and handled seems to stay with the guitar, and you inherit that if you're lucky or aware enough to acknowledge it."

Even though Blackie's neck had become excessively worn down over a dozen years of constant use, Clapton was reluctant to part with it when he put it up for sale on June 24, 2004, for Christie's Crossroads Guitar Auction. Blackie sold for $959,500, raising nearly a million dollars for the Crossroads Centre, a treatment and rehabilitation clinic for chemically dependent and compulsively addicted persons located in Antigua that Clapton founded. The guitar was purchased by Guitar Center and was most recently on display at the retailer's Times Square Manhattan location until the store closed. It also appeared at the Metropolitan Museum of Art's *Play It Loud: Instruments of Rock & Roll* exhibition in 2019.

Although Blackie is now retired, it lives on in many ways. In addition to the Fender Custom Shop's detailed limited edition relic reproduction of Blackie, Fender's Eric Clapton Signature Stratocaster, which has remained in continuous production since 1988, was developed using the iconic Strat as its blueprint.

"It was hard for me to part with Blackie, but I had to put it into perspective," Clapton said. "It was the guitar that I chose for my return to recording in 1974. My working relationship with Blackie was exclusively and extensively through the Seventies and mid Eighties, and then after that it was removed from working life. Blackie was simply worn out, and I was worried about taking it on the road. It just seemed to be unfair. It's like taking a very old man and expecting him to do the impossible every night.

"But I get seriously attached to an instrument, and I felt that Blackie had become part of me. I developed a lot of trust and security with that instrument. It's a remarkable guitar. A guitar like Blackie comes along maybe once in a lifetime." GW

LARRY HULST/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

GEORGE TERRY

SLOWHAND'S RIGHT-HAND MAN

By BILL DeMAIN

FROM 1974 TILL very late in the decade, George Terry was the second guitarist to Clapton, and sometimes his understudy. "There were live concerts back then when Eric would be too drunk to play," says Chuck Kirkpatrick, who was a childhood friend of Terry's. "As a guitar player, George is technically perfect. There's his intonation, his sense of time, his ability to learn parts. But he was not in Eric's league in terms of blues guitar."

"He was the perfect number two for Eric," Albhy Galuten adds. "It was like the Don Felder-Joe Walsh [*Eagles*] relationship — Don being absolutely meticulous, Joe playing whatever strikes him in the moment."

Terry, an in-demand session guitarist who worked with the Bee Gees, ABBA and Joe Cocker, first met Clapton in 1970. Four years later, he was invited to the studio for the recording of *461 Ocean Boulevard*.

"George was a hustler," Clapton told *Rolling Stone*. "He was good for me that way because I'm very lazy. I need the help."

It was also Terry who lobbied for "I Shot the Sheriff" during the *461* sessions. "I gave Eric the Bob Marley record *Burnin'* and did my best hype on reggae music, telling him to play along and have fun," Terry said.

Terry would go on to contribute more material, writing "Mainline Florida" and co-writing "Don't Blame Me" with Clapton and "Lay Down Sally" with Clapton and Marcy Levy. Another Clapton/Terry composition, "Let Me Stay," turned up on Terry's 2004 album, *Guitar Drive*.

While Terry was recording the album that would become 1981's *Life*, Clapton called to say he needed him for a few dates. "George flat out told Eric, 'No'," Kirkpatrick says. "That didn't sit well. Eric said, 'Fine. Pack up all the cases and guitars that belong to me and ship them back. You're done.' George had been through a lot with Eric, and I think it had run its course." GW

[*from left*] George Terry, Carlos Santana and Eric Clapton on stage in Palo Alto, California, August 6, 1975

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SLOWHAND IN THE '80s

MR. SLOWHAND'S WILD RIDE

Eric Clapton

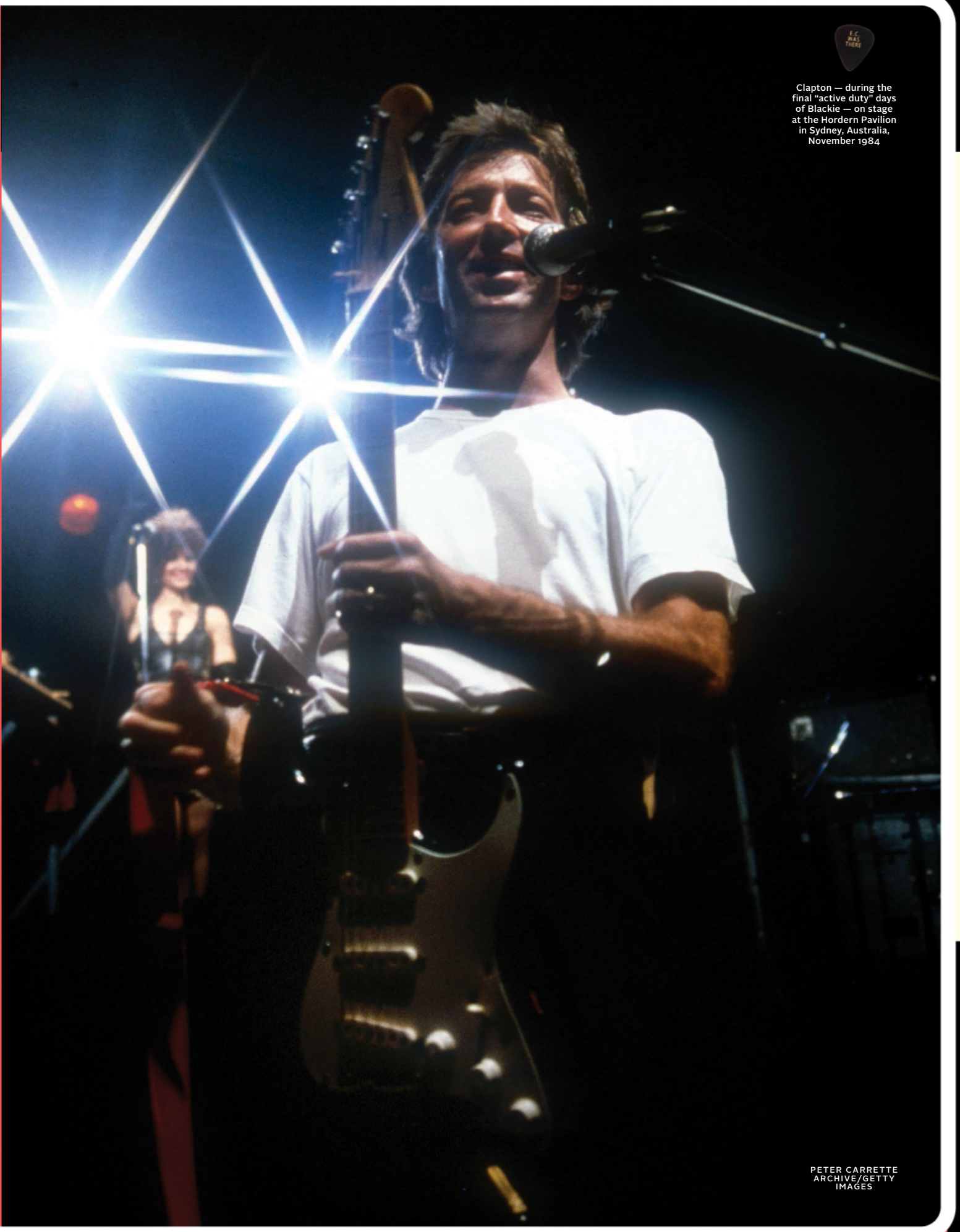
BOARDS A TRAIN WITH *ANOTHER TICKET* AND DISEMBARKS EIGHT YEARS LATER AS A FULLY-FLEDGED *JOURNEYMAN*

By ANDREW DALY

DESPITE KICKING THINGS off with a bang alongside Jeff Beck for 1981's Amnesty International benefit in London, which many signaled as "a return to form," Eric Clapton wasn't ready for the Eighties. It seems obvious now, but looking back, even Clapton would probably agree. To that end, the downfall, if you could call it that, wasn't so much steep as it was somber, with Clapton progressively moving away from his patented "woman tone," which had come by way of blending various humbucker-equipped guitars with cranked Marshall amps.

Going into the Seventies, Clapton was still considered "God" by some. But by 1980, at 35, he was perhaps one of your lesser gods, shelling out soft rock accented by even softer — but still kinda bluesy — licks. But it wasn't all bad, as by the early Eighties, Clapton had assembled a rocking, all-British band featuring Gary Booker on keys, Dave Markee on bass, Henry Spinetti (younger brother of actor Victor Spinetti, who starred in three Beatles movies) on drums, and most importantly, the ever-capable and entirely essential Albert Lee on guitar.

When Lee wandered into Clap-



Clapton — during the final "active duty" days of Blackie — on stage at the Hordern Pavilion in Sydney, Australia, November 1984

PETER CARRETTE ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

ton's camp in 1978, the idea was to spice up Clapton's backing band. "We'd known each other for a long time, and we ended up doing a session together in London in 1978 for Marc Benno," Lee says. "We played together for a week on that. At the end of the session, Eric's manager [*Roger Forrester*] came up to me and said, 'How would you feel about coming out on the road with Eric to play second guitar?' I thought, 'That sounds like fun' — and off we went."

Considering that Clapton was grappling with self-inflicted issues including (but not limited to) drug and alcohol addiction, Lee coming along wasn't just about providing a capable live partner; with his fingerstyle approach and hybrid-picking technique that was entirely different from Clapton's, Lee brought new flavors and positive energy to the party. Moreover, he inserted some sorely needed blues edginess — or call it country sharpness — into a mix that had become increasingly soft-rock.

None of this was lost on Clapton, who, despite his status, has reportedly always been generous — certainly, to bandmates who deliver the goods. Clapton was so happy to have Lee on board that he gifted him a coveted '58 Gibson Les Paul. "At our very first rehearsal, we were talking about guitars," Lee says. "I happened to mention a Les Paul Custom that I had in the Sixties, and I was regretting the fact I'd sold it to buy something else; it was a big mistake. So Eric said, 'Oh, yeah, I've got one of those at home somewhere.' I thought no more about it — and I thought he'd forgotten about it. But the roadie showed up the next day with a '58 Les Paul Custom, and he handed it over to me to use. Eric was a Strat man by then, so he wasn't using it."

Despite the softness seeping its way into his studio recordings, once on the road with Lee, Clapton seemed invigorated, leading to the recording of two December 1979 performances at Budokan Theater in Tokyo that became the beloved 1980 double live album, *Just One Night*. Unlike what was to come, *Just One Night* found Clapton and friends brimming with passion and raw energy (Case in point: the band's dramatic, eight-minute-long take on Otis Rush's "Double Trouble").

More memorable still is the fact that the record showcases the interplay between Clapton and Lee — especially when it comes to their respective solos on the extended version of J.J. Cale's "Cocaine."

It's important to know that Lee — despite the pride associated with the performance (he played the country-tinged second solo while Clapton played the bluesy first solo) — doesn't quite look at it that way. "I never really felt it was a guitar battle," Lee says. "I felt it was a conversation, really. Also, I sang two or three songs [*including "Setting Me Up" and Rick Danko's vocal parts on "All Our Past Times"*]. Throughout the whole time I was with Eric, really, I was the harmony singer. There were no girl singers in those years. It was mainly down to me."

One would've assumed that Clapton would take the energy he found on the road into the studio for his next record, and its title, *Another Ticket*, seemed to foreshadow as much. Instead, when Clapton and his band hit Compass Point Studios in Nassau, Bahamas, in 1980, the edge that once defined him was still missing in action.

Retrospect says that 1981's *Another Ticket* was a modest success, as evidenced by its position at Number 18 on the U.K. charts (and the Top 10 status of its Clapton-penned single, "I Can't Stand It"). But Clapton's music was never meant to be modest — especially with such a rocking yet blues-leaning band. That's not to say *Another Ticket* is poor; it's more to say that at 35, it seemed Clapton was more interested in blues complacency than juicing up the genre as he had a decade prior.

Still, "Floating Bridge" features some interesting tones, and the overall tragic nature of the album, which centers around death, and in the case of "Rita Mae," murder, could be seen as an example of Clapton leaning into his blues heritage, albeit in a highly mellowed-out fashion. Indeed, it seems Slowhand was wallowing in misery by this time, which is precisely why *Another Ticket* is a bit low on gusto.

It was bad enough that Clapton had gone from innovative dragon slayer to a yacht rock-leaning softy nearly overnight, leading to cookie-cutter album after cookie-cutter album. But making matters worse — and this was

BONAMASSA'S PICKS

JOE CHOOSES HIS FAVORITE CLAPTON TUNE FROM THE '80S

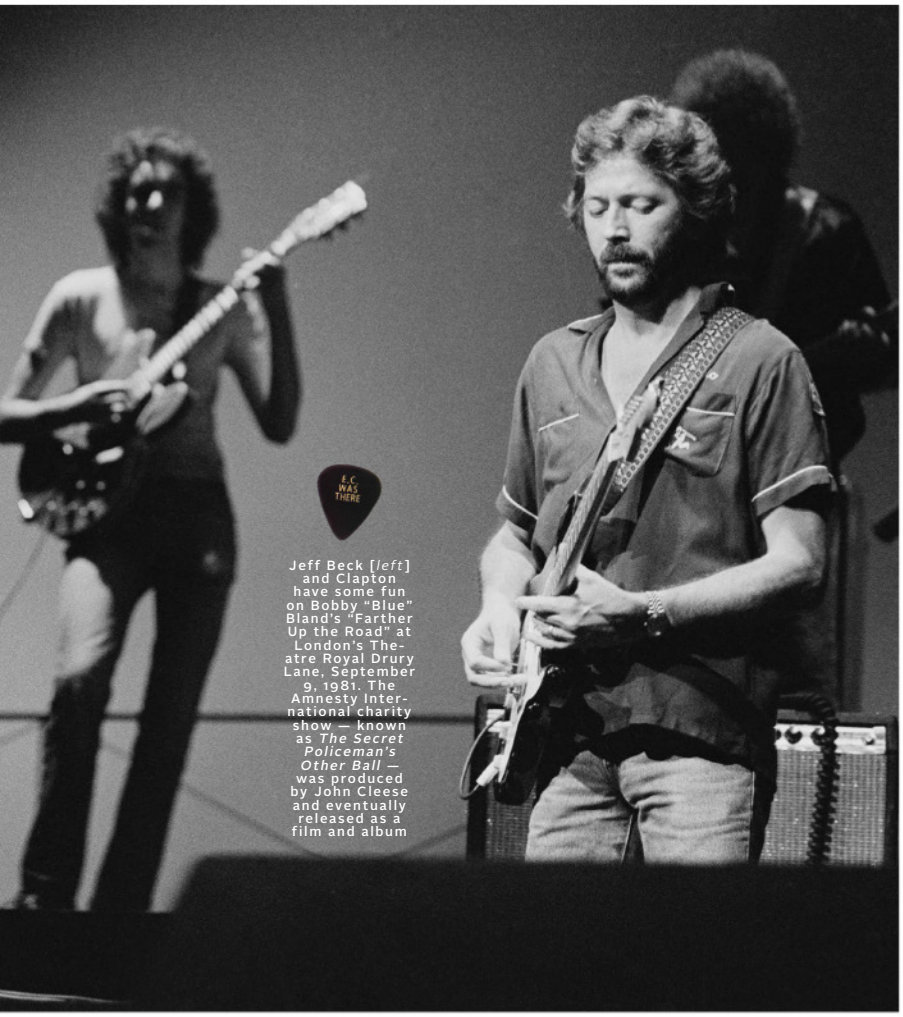
"FOREVER MAN" FROM *BEHIND THE SUN* (1985)

ONE OF MY favorite ever songs from Clapton is "Forever Man." It's a sound that many guys his age were going for back then, which married where he'd been with the sound of the Eighties — and also shed some light on where he was going afterward. I guess he was doing a Don Williams-type thing, you know? I've always felt that "Forever Man" had a real Tulsa feel but also was kind of European in some of its style and influence.

The song starts off great and has such a hook. Then that cool riff comes along; I just love it. Many people think Clapton peaked in the Sixties or Seventies, but he was at his best once he was in his 40s. Once you get to that age, you still have piss and vinegar like when you're in your 20s, but you're more mature.

I think those things began to coalesce for Clapton, and that's why you get a very winning song like "Forever Man." It's an example of how just when you think you've got him figured out, Eric Clapton will turn around and fuck you up on guitar like no other. He can still play better, has better songs, and, to this day, still brings it.

— Interview by Andrew Daly



Jeff Beck [*left*] and Clapton have some fun on Bobby "Blue" Bland's "Farther Up the Road" at London's Theatre Royal Drury Lane, September 9, 1981. The Amnesty International charity show — known as *The Secret Policeman's Other Ball* — was produced by John Cleese and eventually released as a film and album

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

nothing new by the early Eighties — was his worsening alcoholism, which by 1982 had reached code red status. Somewhere in between fits of complacency and a sudden 'Come to Jesus' moment that saw him "deepen his commitment to Christianity," Clapton checked himself into rehab to sort himself out. Specifically, he checked himself in during January 1982 — but not before hopping on a plane and drinking himself into oblivion one last time out of fear that he'd never drink again.

That sounds pretty damn awful, and according to Clapton, it was. "In the lowest moments of my life, the only reason I didn't commit suicide was that I knew I wouldn't be able to drink anymore if I were dead," Clapton said in his autobiography. "It was the only thing I thought was worth living for, and the idea that people were about to try and remove me from alcohol was so terrible that I drank and drank and drank, and they had to practically carry me to the clinic."

"'HOW WOULD YOU FEEL ABOUT COMING OUT ON THE ROAD TO PLAY SECOND GUITAR?' I THOUGHT, 'THAT SOUNDS LIKE FUN' — AND OFF WE WENT"

— ALBERT LEE

Despite doctors' orders not to engage in activities that would trigger alcohol consumption or stress, Clapton, seemingly brimming with energy, hit the studio to record what would be his next album, 1983's *Money and Cigarettes*, a name chosen because Clapton is said to have felt that those two things were all he had left. Sadly, Clapton's new and more clear-headed lease on life did not result in a change of musical course, with *Money and Cigarettes* providing more of the same low-energy content he'd been perpetrating since the mid-to-late Seventies. The only difference is that now Clapton couldn't lean on addiction as an excuse for his amour-propre.

And to be sure, it wasn't his band's fault, either — especially given that slide ace Ry Cooder and master bassist Donald "Duck" Dunn were added to the mix, moves that should have been inspiring. But this was Clapton, after all, and while *Money and Cigarettes* might have been past its sell-by date out of the gate, it does have its moments, such as "Man in Love," the "All Along the Watchtower"-esque "Ain't Going Down" and — best of all — the blazing six-string interplay between Clapton and Lee on "The Shape You're In," which Lee remembers well. "We had such different approaches to the music," he says. "I was always very conscious about trying to accompany and supplement what he was doing. That's what people pay to hear, and he was happy to let me step out and play."

Money and Cigarettes dropped in February of 1983 and was touted as a comeback album, which was to feature a sober and supposedly more creative Clapton. But success was again measured in modesty, with the album topping out at Number 20 in several countries. In short, this was not a level of success for someone who had achieved "God" status.

Another wrinkle showed up when a younger, hipper, far more aggressive-sounding and also Strat-wielding gunslinger from Texas — Stevie Ray Vaughan — inserted himself into the conversation via his debut record, *Texas Flood*, which was released in June 1983. For too long, Clapton had been asleep at the wheel, mainly providing records to use as white noise for lazy drives through the countryside or the desert. It had been years since he unleashed himself and made his Strat squeal, but now SRV was here with a record stacked with tracks to bump, grind and sweat to, including "Love Struck Baby," "Pride and Joy" and his version of Buddy Guy's "Mary Had a Little Lamb," quite possibly leaving Clapton a smidge envious. For the first time since the aforementioned "Clapton is God" graffiti, Clapton's status as a premier bluesbreaker had been challenged. And while you might think his ego and track record kept him from caring, if Albert Lee is to be believed, Clapton was, at the very least, listening to what SRV was doing.

"[*Eric*] got a great joy out of listening to other guitarists," Lee says. "He especially loved Stevie Ray [*Vaughan*]." Literally within months of *Texas Flood's* release, Clapton changed his style, guitar tone and overall vibe to something — well, with a bit more heft to it. More on that later.

Looking back on his time with Clapton, Lee says, "I think I did a pretty good job, but I never really looked at the whole deal as me competing with him. We were all there to make music, and my style worked alongside

him. It was complementary rather than competitive."

Meanwhile, SRV released another barnburner of a record in 1984's *Couldn't Stand the Weather*, further loosening Clapton's once ironclad grip on blues-rock guitar. Vaughan also was being compared (in these very pages) to Jimi Hendrix; after all, he was serving up blistering covers of "Voodoo Child (Slight Return)," "Little Wing" and "Third Stone from the Sun" night after night.

But Clapton had a retort of sorts — 1984's masterful *The Pros and Cons of Hitch Hiking* — which saw him partnering up with Roger Waters for the latter's first post-Pink Floyd foray. Once he was perched beside Waters, Clapton was a man on fire, dishing out solos that still read back as some of the best of his career. To this point, Clapton had made a tactical error by meandering around and releasing blues-like but mostly blues-adjacent pop filler, forsaking the "song within the song" approach that many of his Cream, Blind Faith and Derek and the Dominos solos had shown. But with Waters, as evidenced by songs like "5:01 AM (The Pros and Cons of Hitchhiking)" and "4:41 AM (Sexual Revolution)," Clapton threw everything he had at the wall, and nearly all of it stuck.

In short, the album and its subsequent tour showcased the array of E minor, heavily compressed, tone-perfect solos and riffs that proved Clapton could still be "God" — even if SRV were here to stay; and SRV wasn't going anywhere. But that shouldn't have been an issue, as Clapton was back amid the conversation and primed and ready to take on the remainder of the Eighties, right?

You would have thought that, and in some ways, it was true. Yes, Clapton did revamp his look, tone and approach. And yes, he was prepared to back up the success alongside Waters with his own success. But the thing is, Clapton wasn't ready for the Eighties, and by late 1984, he had become painfully aware of that. And so, while on a split from his wife, Pattie Boyd, Clapton teamed up with — and this still seems odd — Phil Collins to help right the ship, along with legendary producer Ted Templeman, resulting in 1985's *Behind the Sun*.

One of the most significant issues with Clapton's work, dating back to the mid-Seventies, was that his guitar playing had taken a backseat to whatever sounds he felt would grant him chart success, stripping him of what made him great in the first place. Surely, Clapton was aware of this — especially with the guitar-forward SRV gobbling up headlines and air time — and *Behind the Sun* certainly has its share of memorable solos and riffs.

So that was one problem sorted; but now, another presented itself, which admittedly is subjective: an over-reliance — probably at the behest of Collins — on drum machines and synthesizers. Case in point, here's how *Guitar World* put it back in 2015: "The last minute and a half of 'Just Like a Prisoner' might represent Clapton's mid-Eighties high-water mark, at least from a shred perspective. The song features what could easily be considered one of his 'angriest' solos. He even keeps playing long after the intended fade-out point, until the band stops abruptly. Maybe he was upset about the overpowering Eighties production, ridiculous synthesizers and obtrusive, way-too-loud drums that threaten to hijack the song at any moment."

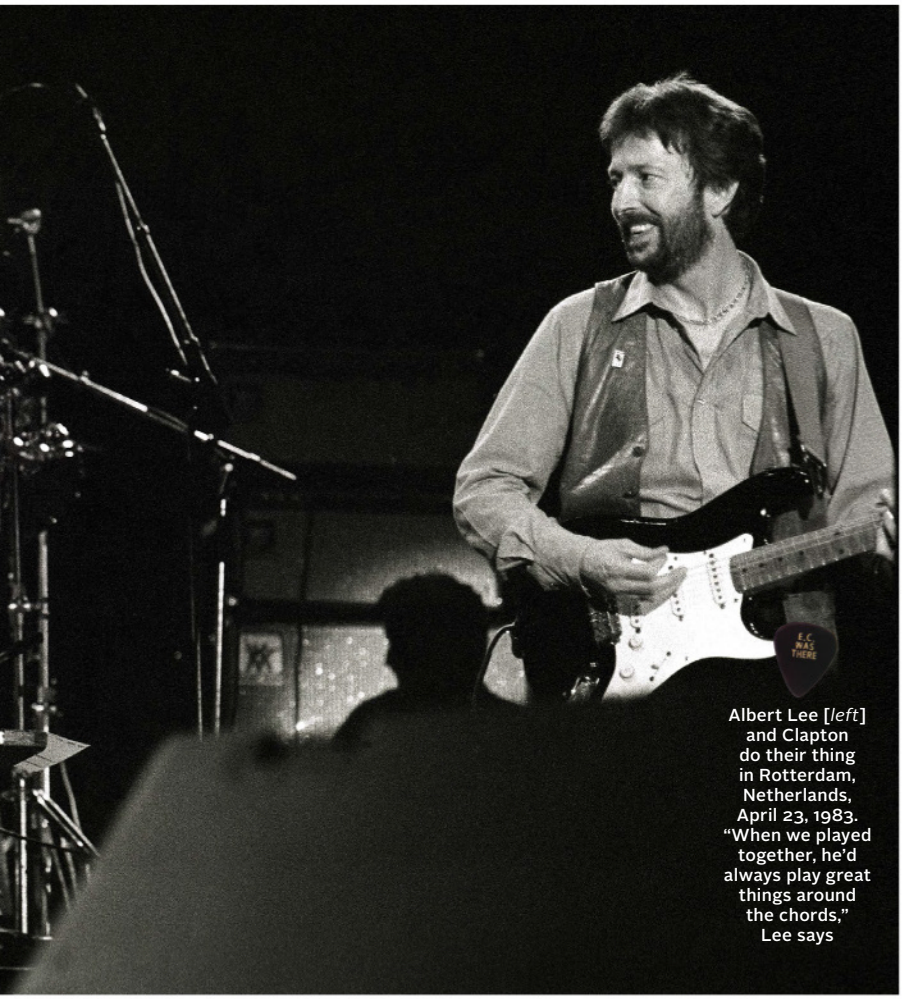
But on the bright side, while Clapton's old band was gone, *Behind the Sun* does feature a ton of quality players, such as Fleetwood Mac's Lindsey Buckingham, who played rhythm guitar on "Something's Happening," and Toto's Steve Lukather on "See What Love Can Do" and the album's most memorable track, the polarizing yet beloved "Forever Man."

Looking back on how he ended up at the *Behind the Sun* sessions, Lukather almost seems embarrassed, saying, "I wasn't very important to the album at all. Honestly, I feel like I did very little in those sessions. I remember being very nervous and thinking I should play really simple so that people wouldn't even know I was there."

As for Clapton's state of mind at a time when the urgency to deliver a competitive record must have been at the forefront, Lukather says, "Eric was really nice to me, but we weren't close. I added very little to his stuff, I think. I remember walking in, and Eric examined my fingers and said, 'You don't have any calluses.' He seemed disappointed, but I had just gotten out of the shower, so my hands were soft!"

Indeed, Clapton now seemed ready for the Eighties... or he was at least prepared to try and sound like something out of the Eighties. On the strength, if you could call it that, of Templeman and Collins' techy production, Clapton had a hit on his hands. "Forever Man" was very well received, even if it, along with the rest of the album, sounded more akin to Steve Winwood ala *High Life* than anything he'd done back when he was universally considered the greatest guitarist on the planet.

"ERIC SAID, 'YOU DON'T HAVE ANY CALLUSES.' HE SEEMED DISAPPOINTED, BUT I HAD JUST GOTTEN OUT OF THE SHOWER, SO MY HANDS WERE SOFT"
— STEVE LUKATHER



Albert Lee [*left*] and Clapton do their thing in Rotterdam, Netherlands, April 23, 1983. "When we played together, he'd always play great things around the chords," Lee says

ROB VERHORST/REDFERNS (CLAPTON/LEE) NIGEL OSBOURNE/REDFERNS (STRAT)

it came at a time when Clapton was seen as regaining his footing. In the wake of a second and still successful trip to rehab, Clapton emerged prepared to reclaim the throne again. And much like he had with Waters in '84, he set his own music aside and played session man, this time for Harrison, who was due for a renaissance of his own — and got one via 1987's *Cloud Nine*.

It was a serendipitous meeting of musical minds; with Clapton seemingly being unencumbered by the pressures of measuring up to his past, he laid down some of his best Eighties work on tracks like "Cloud 9," "That's What It Takes," "Devil's Radio" and "Wreck of the Hesperus." On the backside of those tracks, among other hits, *Cloud Nine* was a success, and a now sober and soon-to-be-single Clapton began ruminating on his next move, seeing him begin to write many of the songs that would appear on his final — and best — album of the Eighties, *Journeyman*.

Everything about *Journeyman* was different. For starters, it came on the heels of the successful (and truly awesome) 1988 box set, *Crossroads*, which showcased many of Clapton's older and sometimes out-of-print-on-vinyl hits to a new and now CD-consuming generation. The positive reception for *Crossroads*, coupled with the fact that SRV had been slightly down for the count while battling his own addiction demons, allowed Clapton the space to reorient himself. Moreover, Clapton had found himself, meaning he rediscovered that long-lost "woman tone" he'd been missing, much of which can be attributed to his new signature Fender Stratocaster (see below). Yes, *Journeyman* has its share of Eighties production — no one can deny that. But it's also loaded with blues numbers, including "Before You Accuse Me," "Running on Faith"

The reinvigorated Clapton wasn't letting any time go to waste, either. Only a year after *Behind the Sun* (not to mention the *Edge of Darkness* soundtrack, which he recorded with Michael Kamen), he delivered the super-slick *August*, which was successful courtesy of tracks like "It's in the Way That You Use It" and "Tearing Us Apart," which featured Tina Turner. But retrospect tells a different story, and it's hard to deny that *August* is probably Clapton's worst record — especially as far as the Eighties are concerned. Not even a track like "Miss You," which features some of Clapton's most inspired playing of the decade, could save an album entirely bogged down by synths, gated reverb and guitars that are often buried in the mix.

In his search for success, Clapton not only fell off the wagon of sobriety but also saw his marriage to Boyd come to an end. The latter was a bit of karma, seeing as he'd stolen her from his best friend, George Harrison, in the Seventies, but the former was especially unfortunate, as

The engine behind *Journeyman*, Fender's Eric Clapton Strat, which was issued in 1988

SIGN HERE, MR. CLAPTON!

THE ORIGINAL 1988 Fender Eric Clapton Stratocaster was Fender's first official signature model — aka, the guitar that kicked off the company's highly successful artist program (BTW, Fender's latest installment, the Bruno Mars Signature Strat, was announced in early November). The initial collaboration with Clapton took Blackie (See page 58) as its basic inspiration, with a V-shape neck profile and more modern tweaks, including Gold Lace Sensor pickups and a 25dB mid-boost circuit. Clapton used prototypes of the guitar in 1986 during his Eric Clapton & Friends shows, and it soon became Fender's most successful signature guitar. To hear the guitar in action — in the Eighties, anyway — check out his 1989 album, *Journeyman*. The guitar can be heard on every track. Well, almost... As Clapton told us in 1988, "The only song I don't use it on is 'Hard Times,' where I used the ES-335 to get a kind of an old studio sound, a more acoustic blues guitar tone." — *Damian Fanelli*

IT'S IN THE WAY THAT YOU USE IT

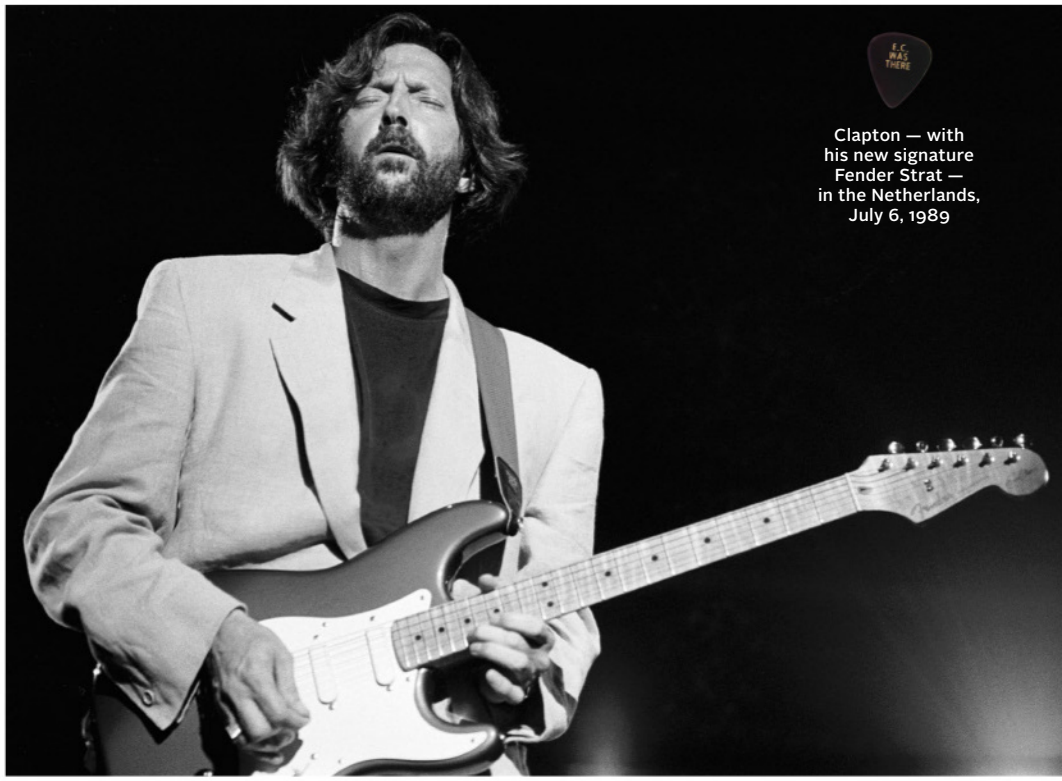
PETER FRAMPTON, ALBERT LEE AND MARTIN BARRE, FORMERLY OF JETHRO TULL, EXPLAIN WHAT SETS CLAPTON'S PLAYING APART FROM THE PACK

PETER FRAMPTON: "It's his attention to the past and his fluidity. He has a very intoxicating style. In some of the Cream songs, he lifted solos from Albert King, Freddie King — all of the Kings — and he put them into his own, which I thought was fantastic. In fact, my favorite Eric solos ever were from that 1968 farewell concert Cream did at the Albert Hall, when he was playing the Gibson ES-335. But Eric is very forward-thinking. By the time he was touring with Delaney & Bonnie in 1969, I think he was envisioning what he wanted to do in the years ahead. He already had so much credibility and presence as a player, going into the Seventies, that I think he'd had enough of the guitar hero thing and wanted to expand, writing songs and singing. Which he did — brilliantly."

ALBERT LEE: "As a guitarist, he's in total command of what he does. His ideas, his phrasing, how melodic he can be. When he's on, he's just brilliant. I spent five years on the road with him. He was drinking at the time, and he'd have the occasional bad night, but most nights, he'd be absolutely brilliant, and everyone in the band would be astounded by what he played. I think by the early Seventies, he disliked that image of being a guitar god. But he surpassed that because he turned into a really good singer and songwriter. That's what I admire about him most — his songwriting and choice of songs that he covers. When we played together, he'd always play great things around the chords. It always astounded me, because I'd do a solo and play something far more complicated than what he was doing. Then his solo would just have a simplicity, and be nicer and sweeter to the ear. And that's what the general public likes."

MARTIN BARRE: "Eric Clapton was the hot ticket for wannabe guitarists, including myself! We devoured every Cream album for inspiration and information and played them to destruction! I never met him, unfortunately, but I followed his career through the many years of touring and always had great respect for him as a person as well as a musician."

— Interviews by Bill DeMain



Clapton — with his new signature Fender Strat — in the Netherlands, July 6, 1989

FRANS SCHELLEKENS/REDFERNS

and "Hard Times."

A critical addition to the sessions was Robert Cray, who lent his licks to six of the album's 12 tracks and even co-wrote "Old Love" with Clapton. Sadly, Cray declined to be interviewed for this story; however, another venerable six-string veteran — Phil Palmer — also played a role on *Journeyman,* especially the album's signature track, "Bad Love."

"I had run into Eric in a little club in London called the Mean Fiddler," Palmer says. "I looked up while playing and was shocked to see Eric standing there. Long story short, we got to talking, and Eric said to me, 'Phil, it's nice to see you. I'm making a record, and I'd like you to drop by and play on a few tracks. I did so, and the first track we did was 'Bad Love.'"

Looking back on how he approached the track, given that his fingerstyle approach was in stark contrast to Clapton's, Palmer says, "Musically, Eric was a very generous guy. I loved working with him because he encouraged me to play. Of course, you have to learn not to step on what Eric's doing, but through my session work, I'd learned how to adapt, and Eric had a good way of letting me know in an unspoken way when I should jump in. He'd give a nod, and off I'd go."

Of note, Palmer is only credited with lending a hand to "Bad Love," but he recalls being heavily involved with two additional tracks, "Old Love" and "Running on Faith," saying, "Eric encouraged me to play loud, which was like a dream come true. I wasn't always encouraged to do that in other sessions, but Eric did. And I remember that by that point, I'd gotten the idea that my long-used [*Fender*] Nocaster was pretty valuable, so I didn't use that with Eric. Eric supplied me with one of his signature Strats, which were great guitars put together in the Fender Custom Shop. I still use them."

Looking back, it's easy to see why *Journeyman* is considered Clapton's best album of the Eighties, even if some reviewers, such as Robert Christgau, likened it to a "fluke," saying, "[*Clapton*] has no record-making knack. He farms out the songs, sings them competently enough and marks them with his guitar, which sounds kind of like Mark Knopfler's."

That's harsh criticism, and perhaps there's some truth to it, but regardless, *Journeyman* gave Clapton the success and singularity he needed. Moreover, it finally gave him something to compete against SRV, who released his own comeback album (of sorts) in 1989, *In Step*. But this time, Clapton bettered SRV, as *Journeyman* reached Number 1 on the Album Rock Chart and landed him a Grammy for Best Male Rock Vocal Performance in 1990. Not too shabby.

As for Palmer, he stayed on with Clapton, hitting the road in support of *Journeyman* and proving his most capable sideman since Lee left him half a decade prior. Looking back, Palmer says, "That album was just great... but it's hard to quantify. The band was magnificent, and spontaneous things would happen daily."

As for what he learned from Clapton, Palmer says, "The biggest lesson

I got from Eric was to relax. I played with him hundreds of times, and when I stood behind him on stage, I saw that he was most at home. Maybe not in the studio, but live, Eric was free. He wasn't nervous on stage, so that was the biggest lesson — to enjoy the moment."

Palmer makes a good point: Clapton was always freer on stage than in the studio. It's probably why he kicked off the decade so successfully with *Just One Night*, and it's perhaps why many felt his appearance alongside Jeff Beck at the Amnesty International benefit would signal a return to form. And if he'd carry that same vigor into the studio, we'd look back on Clapton's decade in the doldrums a bit differently.

But then again, it wasn't all bad, and some of us, even though albums like *Behind the Sun* and *August* play back more like dollar bin and thrift store fodder than albums to remember, have a ton of personal memories tied to the likes of "Forever Man," "It's in the Way That You Use it" and "She's Waiting." And to be sure, no one can take away the God-like strokes of genius heard on Clapton's collaborations with Roger Waters, and to a lesser extent, George Harrison.

And so, the Eighties did little to encourage the idea that Clapton was "God," but in the end, it didn't entirely dispel the notion, either. As for Lee, when he looks back, he admits, "I haven't listened back [*to Clapton's Eighties music*] in a long time, so I can't name a specific track. But I like the later stuff; the solos are really melodic, even though I'm not really into Eric for the guitar solos. I think he's a great writer and a really good singer. The whole package works for me as a listener."

"I'D LEARNED HOW TO ADAPT, AND ERIC HAD A GOOD WAY OF LETTING ME KNOW IN AN UNSPOKEN WAY WHEN I SHOULD JUMP IN. HE'D GIVE A NOD, AND OFF I'D GO"
— PHIL PALMER

As for Lukather, who sheepishly lent a hand to one of Clapton's most polarizing Eighties moments in "Forever Man," he seems to echo Lee's sentiment, saying, "I am embarrassed even to be a part of the whole thing, but Eric is great. He was a huge influence on me, and I wore his stuff out. What can I say that hasn't already been said?"

While the Eighties may have been choppy for Clapton, if anything, what he'll most be remembered for is the redemptive way he rounded the decade out. In truth, not many artists could survive such critical onslaught, the unintentional creation of eventual thrift store fodder and those perpetual assertions of "God" status being revoked, but Clapton did.

And so, for Eric Clapton, the Eighties wasn't only about music or even about guitar; it was about across-the-board survival and living to fight another day. Clapton might not have been ready for the Eighties, but he sure as hell did his damndest to survive them — and to eventually come out on top. GW

Bill DeMain contributed to this feature.

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SOUND CHECK

Fender Highway Series Dreadnought and Parlor

By Chris Gill

FENDER HAS CONSIDERABLY upped its game in the acoustic guitar realm over recent times by greatly expanding its offerings as well as introducing bold innovations like the Acoustasonic models. The new Highway Series continues that expansion and innovation with models that combine some of the Acoustasonic's features in a package created to be more focused on traditional acoustic guitar tones and performance rather than providing an electric/acoustic hybrid.

The Highway Series currently consists of two different models — the Dreadnought and the Parlor — and each are available with a choice of either a spruce or mahogany top. From a frontal view, the Dreadnought and Parlor look similar to their regular purely acoustic counterparts but just a little smaller. There's a familiar-looking round soundhole and rosewood pin bridge, but the pickup mounted along the upper edge of the soundhole below the 20th fret, two top-mounted control knobs, beveled edges that reveal a good portion of the chambered mahogany body and signature Fender six-on-a-side headstock suggest something different is going on.

And indeed, something different *is* going on. The tapered floating x-braced top is mounted upon a 2 ¼-inch thick thinline mahogany body that is slightly wider than an average solidbody guitar but about half the thickness of

Fender Highway Series Dreadnoughts in mahogany [*left*] and spruce

[*far left*] A closer look at the checkerboard rosette and top purfling

a traditional acoustic flattop. The checkerboard rosette and top purfling provides the aesthetic appeal of a deluxe guitar without being too audacious or flashy.

The body features chambers carved out of a slab of wood, starting out similar to a solidbody design, which helps prevent feedback while still delivering genuine acoustic guitar resonance and a lightweight, comfortable feel. The Dreadnought model measures about 15 inches across the lower bout, while the Parlor measures slightly less at 14 ½ inches but has a much narrower and curvier waist and considerably slimmer upper bout.

The bolt-on mahogany neck has a 25 ½-inch (Dreadnought) or 24 ¾-inch (Parlor) scale length, slim C-shape profile, 12-inch radius and 1.6875-inch nut width for playability comparable to an electric guitar neck, while the rosewood fretboard, satin finish and narrow tall frets retain a traditional acoustic vibe.

With electronics that are designed to offer warm, rich authentic acoustic tones, the Highway Series is a straight-up acoustic-electric model. The Fishman Fluence Acoustic pickup and electronics deliver amplified tones with natural acoustic character. The controls consist of a volume knob and a contour knob that morphs between two distinct EQ settings, providing everything from crisp attack (with shimmering treble for driving strummed rhythms that cut through a mix) to warm, round tones that are ideal for fingerstyle or solo singer/songwriter voice accompaniment.

Thanks to its longer scale length (which means extra string tension) and slightly larger overall body and sound chamber size, the Dreadnought model has more prominent bass and a more aggressive, instantaneous attack. The Parlor model sounds a little warmer and mellower, and the more restrained bass character results in an overall tone that is more balanced. The spruce top versions of both models have brighter treble response and more pronounced attack than the mahogany top variants, which have a more even, almost compressed attack, and treble that is more sonorous than brilliant. Both models sound surprisingly good unplugged, with unexpectedly lush, reverberant resonance and ample but moderate volume projection that is perfect for practicing in an apartment without annoying the neighbors.

Fender Highway Series Parlor models in spruce [*left*] and in mahogany

Plugged in, both the Dreadnought and Parlor models deliver their best performance as an acoustic-electric that can hold its own on stage with electric guitars, basses and amplified keyboards without feedback. The Highway Series guitars' slim, contoured bodies are also a lot more comfortable to play on stage for extended periods than a traditional acoustic. The rear-mounted battery compartment makes it super easy to change batteries in seconds, and the side-mounted output jack keeps the guitar cable out of the way.

Designed to look and sound like a full-size acoustic steel string flattop guitar while providing the comfort, feel and playability of an electric, Fender's Highway Series Dreadnought and Parlor will equally satisfy acoustic purists looking for no-compromise tone and dynamics when plugging in, as well as electric players seeking an acoustic-electric with a familiar, comfortable feel.

CHEAT SHEET

STREET PRICE
$999.99
MANUFACTURER
Fender, fender.com

PROS: Comfortable thinline body; rich, dynamic amplified acoustic tones; comfortable neck with electric neck playability.

CONS: Unplugged acoustic tone is not quite as loud or dynamic as a traditional full-size acoustic.

THE BOTTOM LINE
With its slim body and electric-style neck, true acoustic tones both unplugged and amplified and traditional styling, the Fender Highway Series may be the ultimate acoustic-electric for both acoustic purists and electric players who want to stay in their comfort zones.

UAFX OX Stomp Dynamic Speaker Emulator

By Chris Gill

IN MY PREVIOUS review of UAFX stomp boxes, I mentioned how Universal Audio was bringing the sounds of classic studio gear to the stage. Their new OX Stomp pedal also brings studio-quality sound to the stage, but this time around they've adapted modern software processing instead of classic hardware, harnessing the power of UA's outstanding Dynamic Speaker Modeling technology in a stomp box format. OX Stomp also provides effects like 1176 compression, reverb, delay, modulation and more to provide complete studio-polished sounds.

OX Stomp is basically the rig section (speaker/room/mic emulation and effects) of UA's OX Amp Top Box — in other words OX without the reactive load box, headphone amp, digital connections, etc. OX Stomp's pedal format allows users to configure a pedalboard fly rig with an amp emulation pedal like the UAFX Lion '68, Dream '65 and so on, or various other companies' units, but it's also great to use in the studio with an amp head and your favorite reactive load box, an amp's line out (with speaker load) or to upgrade or provide alternative speaker emulation for amp modeling hardware and software. However, even though it's a stomp box it's not really designed to be used going into a standard amp rig — you can do that and get good sounds, but to hear OX Stomp at its best you'll want to use it with full-range studio monitors, FRFR cabs or a stage PA system.

With 22 different speaker emulations ranging from 1x10 and 1x12 cabs to various 4x12 cabs, six cab mics/six room mics (condenser, dynamic, ribbon) and four simultaneous stereo effects (four-band EQ plus low/high cut, 1176 compression, delay with modulation effects like flanger or chorus, and reverb), OX Stomp provides everything your guitar signal needs for post-amp studio polish. Users can configure custom rigs that store all of those features' settings, and six rigs are instantly accessible via a rotary switch on the pedal's top panel. OX Stomp stores up to 1,000 rigs internally, and rigs are assigned to the pedal's rig selector via the UAFX Control app for iOS and Android devices.

Other top panel controls include Room for adjusting room ambience, Speaker Drive for adjusting dynamic responsiveness from tight to distorted cone cry, Output (overall output level) and separate Mic 1 and Mic 2 knobs that adjust the level of the corresponding mics. Mic Select toggle switches for Mic 1 and 2 select Dynamic, Condenser or Ribbon mic models. Rear panel jacks include pairs of TS ¼-inch stereo inputs and outputs and a USB C connector for downloading software updates.

UA's Dynamic Speaker Emulation truly lives up to its name by providing dazzlingly authentic speaker and miked room tones that truly sound and feel like guitar speaker cabinets. I preferred the sound of OX Stomp to the IRs in several expensive amp modelers I own, and especially loved using OX Stomp in a mix-and-match rig with my favorite classic tube heads and Suhr Reactive Load box. The EQ, 1176, delay/modulation and reverb effects are all first class and add an alluring finishing touch for studio sound perfection — these effects are worth the pedal's price alone.

Users have mentioned problems with Bluetooth connections between the OX Stomp and mobile devices with the UAFX Control app. Installing both the latest operating system and updated version of the software should eliminate most problems. I preferred using the app on a tablet device, which made it easier to set up rigs and adjust various parameters. The factory rigs provided with OX Stomp are so good that you may never need to tweak or program your own.

CHEAT SHEET

STREET PRICE: $399
MANUFACTURER: Universal Audio, uaudio.com

PROS: Vast selection of speaker cabs; studio-quality post effects; easy to use on stage or in studio; dynamic responsiveness and authentic room ambience.

CONS: UAFX Control app Bluetooth connection can be unreliable; unbalanced outputs may require DI box in some applications.

THE BOTTOM LINE
The UAFX OX Stomp allows guitarists to enjoy UA's world class Dynamic Speaker Technology with their favorite amp modelers or even "real world" amps (via a reactive load box or line out) in an easy-to-use stomp box format ideal for the stage and studio.

CHEAT SHEET

STREET PRICE:
$1,949.99 – $1,999.99
MANUFACTURER:
Jackson Guitars,
jacksonguitars.com

- **PROS:** Flawless construction and setup; A pair of Seymour Duncan JB TB-4 bridge and '59 SH-1N neck humbucking pickups along with advanced switching options offer classic and heavy tones; the speed neck with 12-16" compound radius with rolled edges provides comfort for speedy playing styles; Floyd Rose 1500 double-locking tremolo ensures tuning precision.
- **CONS:** Expensive. Progressive and metal players may favor active pickup choices instead.
- **THE BOTTOM LINE:** The Jackson American Series Virtuoso is a tier-one instrument where attention to detail is not only felt but heard, and a clear reminder why an American-made guitar is still something to behold

Jackson Guitars American Series Virtuoso

By Paul Riario

SO, WHERE DO I start? Jackson released yet another guitar that looks an awful lot like the numerous others in their ranks of fast-playing and sleekly designed instruments. I don't want to be cynical here because you — like me — are dying to know what's so mind-blowingly different about the new Jackson American Series Virtuoso, so hang on.

A year ago, Jackson launched the American Series Soloist SL3 to rave reviews. Now, with the release of the American Series Virtuoso, Jackson elevated the fanfare with an ultra-slick promotional video that featured major djent and metal artists like Periphery's Misha Mansoor and Revocation's Dave Davidson, along with virtuosic metal titan Marty Friedman as the centerpiece, followed by metal's new wave of up-and-comers such as Heriot's Debbie Gough and Clint Tustin of Erra — all playing the guitar while showcasing their diverse range of shred-tastic styles behind a chugging backdrop of original music. If you haven't seen it, it's worth a look to see the American Series Virtuoso in the capable hands of metal's brightest stars to date.

But gathering up a bunch of influential shredders is still not enough to persuade what's so unique here, so allow me to dig in and divulge what's notable. On the surface, what's new is that the American Series Virtuoso arrives as a dual-humbucker guitar with a bolt-on speed neck as opposed to the Soloist SL3's HSS pickup configuration and neck-through-body construction. It's apparent that Jackson is building upon their extensive lineup of super-octane-performance guitars, but what's key is that once you get a hold of the Virtuoso in your hands, it's unmistakable what makes it a cut above the rest. Until now, I've held and auditioned so many import guitars (like the Jackson X-Series Dinky I reviewed) that I've nearly forgotten what it's like to play one constructed in the USA. That being said, it's like a slap to the face — where you quickly realize there's a tangible upscale refinement to the Virtuoso that makes it a substantially serious instrument because it's so well made. What's more, after a cursory test drive with it, you'll find that it effortlessly improves your rhythmic and fleet-fingered acrobatics so instantaneously, that it's enough to say, "This one's a keeper."

According to Jackson Guitars, the Virtuoso features "150-plus hand-crafted details..." And while I can't even begin to list how that's achieved, I can offer that every inch of the guitar feels like a level-up in precision with its build. The generously sculpted and satin-finished alder body comfortably presses against your body to make you feel connected to it. Its bolt-on "speed neck" is graphite-reinforced with a smoothly contoured "handshake heel," and boasts an alternating five-piece caramel-

ized maple-to-maple neck construction along with a streaked ebony fingerboard with rolled edges, a 12- to 16-inch compound radius and 24 jumbo frets. As an old-school shredder, I've always preferred a bolt-on neck to most neck-through-body designs, and here, Jackson's "speed neck" is accurately portrayed, with a slim and shallow profile that makes any impulse for wide interval stretches and burning up the fretboard an open invitation.

Jackson's sonic engine proclivities often include the powerful combo of the Seymour Duncan JB TB-4 bridge and '59 SH-1N neck humbuckers, both of which are directly mounted to the body for more responsiveness and purer tone. For its control layout, there are dome-style knobs for volume and tone, and a five-way blade switch allowing for a range of full-humbucking and split-coil tonal flavors. Jackson also favors a Floyd Rose 1500 Series double-locking tremolo as its steadfast bridge system for whammy wanderlust, and rounding out its premium components, Gotoh MG-T locking tuners and Dunlop dual-locking strap buttons keep tuning and guitar stability in check respectively.

Surprisingly, the most polarizing aspect of the Virtuoso among influencers and user comments has been the guitar's satin shell pink finish (c'mon, people) and, of course, the steep cost. Since I received that particular finish, I'll stick my head out and say I love it (hey, I came from the Eighties), but I'm aware my metal brethren gravitate toward colors that resemble the abyss — so rejoice, there's a satin black finish for thou, as well as more neutral finishes like mystic blue and specific ocean.

I alluded to it before, but its setup and low action are spot-on right out of the sturdy Foam Core case it comes in. What's immediately discernible by raking the strings is the guitar's response yields incredible depth and sustain, whereas with most import guitars I'll hear a plinky or blunted sound. This, naturally, is the result of skillful craftsmanship at play here, which already tells me the Virtuoso is gonna slay when plugged in. But does it chug? Indeed, it boldly chugs. The duo of Duncans delivers the requisite heft and aggressive output to accommodate most metal styles along with more nuanced tones when set in the 2 and 4 split-coil positions on the selector switch. Altogether, it's a proven recipe of heavy and classic tones for passive pickups regardless that most shredders generally prefer active pickups. But here I find no issue, and am of the mindset that these sound pleasingly raw and lively. All in all, the Virtuoso is a premium instrument with American-made provenance, and that reflects in its higher price tag, but if money is no object, it soars as an ultra-fast guitar that you're going to want to burn many fretboard miles on.

THE SPECS

- **BODY MATERIAL:** Alder
- **BODY FINISH:** Satin
- **NECK:** Five-piece caramelized maple/maple/caramelized maple/maple/caramelized maple
- **NECK CONSTRUCTION:** Bolt-on with graphite reinforcement
- **NECK FINISH:** Hand-rubbed satin urethane
- **SCALE LENGTH:** 25.5" (64.77 cm)
- **FINGERBOARD:** Steaked ebony
- **FINGERBOARD RADIUS:** 12"-16" compound radius (304.8 mm to 406.4 mm)
- **FRETS:** 24 jumbo
- **INLAYS:** Mother of pearl offset dot with Luminlay side dots
- **TRUSS ROD:** Heel-mount truss rod adjustment wheel
- **PICKUPS:** Seymour Duncan JB TB-4 Direct Mount and Seymour Duncan '59 SH-1N Direct-Mount
- **CONTROLS:** Volume, Tone
- **SWITCHING:** 5-position blade: Position 1. Bridge, Position 2. Bridge Outer Coil and Neck Inner Coil, Position 3. Bridge and Neck, Position 4. Bridge Inner Coil and Neck Outer Coil, Position 5. Neck
- **BRIDGE:** Floyd Rose 1500 Series Double-Locking Tremolo
- **HARDWARE FINISH:** Black
- **TUNING MACHINES:** Locking Gotoh MG-T

Buzz Bin
Eventide Riptide

By Paul Riario

SAY THE NAME Eventide and what comes to mind is the company's much-lauded H90 Harmonizer and H9 Max processors. I know it was a NASA-sized undertaking to cram their astronomical multi-effects and pitch-perfect harmonizer technology into those pedalboard-friendly stompboxes, but now Eventide has introduced the Riptide — a more down-to-earth, compact 2-in-1 pedal with an onboard overdrive and Uni-Vibe effect that can be run in stereo. Eventide is making an audacious move by combining two classic effects — effects that many musicians generally use as standalone stompboxes — but more intriguingly, two effects that the company doesn't have any bragging rights to yet. So how does the Riptide fare? Read on.

Similar to the pedals in Eventide's streamlined dot9 series, Riptide's advanced functionality is buried under the hood and simplified to good old-fashioned knob twisting and button pushing on its surface. Its controls consist of Vibe (Mix for chorus/vibrato), Speed and Intensity, for "Vibe" — while the "Drive" section includes Drive, Tone and Level... all easy to comprehend so far. The bonus here is that Riptide has dual voicings per effect that are accessed by pressing the LED buttons just above their corresponding Drive and Vibe footswitches. The color of the LED (green or red) identifies the voice selected. For Drive, green designates a dynamic, mid-focused "Screamer" crunch, while red introduces a smoother, crunchier boost. On the Vibe side, green ushers in a vintage Uni-Vibe swirl, and red delivers a deeply phased vibe. For even more versatility, there's an LED Swap button allowing you to change the order of the signal chain (Vibe into Drive or Drive into Vibe) and any combination of parameters can be mapped to an expression pedal.

Riptide can also be set up in either Preset or Perform (manual) modes. In Preset mode, there are five onboard slots to save presets (expandable to 127 via MIDI) that you can toggle down with the footswitch and view from the Preset LED ladder. In Perform mode, the respective Drive and Vibe footswitches simply turn the effects on and off, and what's useful is the footswitches are dual-action latching or momentary. The pedal offers multiple bypass options with buffered, relay, DSP+FX or kill dry, and also provides MIDI support over TRS or USB. The rear panel has a mono/stereo switch and guitar/line level switch along with input and stereo output jacks, exp jack and USB input. Finally, Riptide's "Catch-up" mode lets players dial in their sound when toggling between presets/parameters, and more preset editing options are available using Eventide Device Manager (EDM) software.

Off the bat, the Riptide sounds so incredibly sophisticated with its drive and vibe duo that you forgive its digital heart ably replicating an analog circuit-latory system. Both effects have a different texture for sure, and a much faster response than any vintage unit, and it's kinda cool to have both in one pedal. What Drive may lack in warmth, it makes up in heaps of thick and layered crunch that can approach distortion along with a full-sounding bottom end. It's more detailed and rich than most guitar processors that offer a multitude of overdriven colors. Riptide's Green-Vibe sounds smooth and expressive, and while it doesn't have the complexity of a vintage Shin-ei Uni-Vibe, the Riptide spins with a pronounced psychedelic swirl. I also dug the Red-Vibe voicing that generates a deep liquid swirl, chewy chorus and throbby phase sounds. But what makes the Riptide head and shoulders above other pedals is its ability to run its Uni-Vibe in stereo and your ability to hear the wonderful nuances of being able to swap the order of effects. Was I swept away? Yeah, you could say that.

CHEAT SHEET

STREET PRICE: $299
MANUFACTURER: Eventide, eventideaudio.com

PROS: Overdrive and Uni-Vibe in one pedal; Stereo operation; dual voicings per effect; Crisp and detailed Uni-Vibe swirl; Thick overdrive; Ability to save five onboard presets (127 more via MIDI).

CONS: Digital. Some may prefer the analog sound of standalone Uni-Vibe and Overdrive pedals.

THE BOTTOM LINE
The Eventide Riptide packs a walloping punch of Uni-Vibe swirls and crunchy overdrive in one pedal that sounds even more present and detailed in stereo.

Donner HUSH-X solidbody guitar

By Chris Gill

WAY BACK IN the early Forties, Les Paul invented a minimalist solidbody electric guitar that he called "The Log." About 80 years later, Donner Music has introduced perhaps the closest soulmate to that guitar since the introduction of the Steinberger in the Eighties. Donner calls the HUSH-X a travel guitar, but it's really a full-size instrument that feels, performs and sounds like a traditional solidbody, albeit one that can be packed into a compact case that looks like a carrying bag for a two-piece pool cue.

Donner offers one version of the HUSH-X guitar: a mahogany version with two finishes — a sunburst and a natural finish. The guitar has a one-piece neck-thru-body design, and lightweight metal frames attach to either side via sliding clamps to provide a leg rest and armrest. The headless design is facilitated by a six-saddle fixed bridge with built-in thumbscrew tuners. Neck features include a 25 ½-inch scale, 22 medium frets, asymmetrical profile, HPL (high-pressure laminate) fingerboard, 403mm radius and 1.65-inch wide bone nut with zero fret.

The pickups consist of a high-output humbucker with an unspecified magnet type at the bridge and an Alnico V single-coil pickup located about 2-3/4 inches from the 22nd fret, which is more like the middle than the neck placement. Resistance measurements for our test example were about 13k ohms for the humbucker and 5.4k ohms for the single-coil, providing a useful balance of hot-rodded humbucker and classic vintage single-coil tones. Other electronic features include a concentric master volume/tone knob with the low-resistance volume control on the outside, an active/passive switch for headphone monitoring in the active position and 1/8-inch Aux input and headphone output jacks.

Weighing less than five pounds, the Donner HUSH-X is super comfortable to play, with the metal frame extensions helping balance the instrument and preventing neck dives. The neck feels the same as any good C-profile neck, and the fretwork is outstanding.

Plugged into an amp, the HUSH-X sounds full-bodied and dynamic, with the humbucker rivaling the tone of many regular solidbodies — in fact, I doubt most guitarists would be able to tell the difference in a blind tone test. The sound is so good that I'm starting to question whether the expensive exotic tone woods that so many guitarist lust over really make much of a difference other than in an aesthetic sense. The humbucker has a great classic rock growl through an overdriven amp with ample balls and bite, while the single-coil pickup has a Strat-like presence and zing that's perfect for blues, funk and slinky rock rhythms.

One feature I particularly liked was the easy-access rear compartment that makes it super easy to change batteries and anchor the strings' ball ends when changing strings. That the headless design allows the use of regular strings thanks to a locking clamp system above the nut.

Donner loads up the HUSH-X with a ton of goodies that add generous extra value. These include a reinforced carrying bag, a clip-on tuner, earbud headphones, 9-volt battery, Allen wrenches (stowed in the battery compartment), extra screws, picks, guitar and case straps and more.

CHEAT SHEET

STREET PRICE: $349
MANUFACTURER: Donner Music, donnermusic.com

PROS: Extremely compact breakdown travel design; affordable; big-sounding pickups; plays and feels like traditional solidbody electric.

CONS: Single-coil pickup is placed more toward the middle than the neck due to the location of the truss rod adjustment cover.

THE BOTTOM LINE
The minimal design of the Donner HUSH-X certainly is compact and lightweight enough to deserve its "travel guitar" distinction, but it performs every bit as good as a traditional full-size solidbody, making it a great affordable all-around axe.

IN DEEP
by Andy Aledort

For video of this lesson, go to
guitarworld.com/february2024

SING THE SONG, PART 2

More on emulating vocals with and without a slide

LAST MONTH, I discussed the virtues of aiming to emulate the sound of the human voice when playing single-note lines and detailed a variety of ways to do so, with and without a slide. Those distinct qualities heard in the way vocal melodies are often articulated, such as the use of vibrato and glissandos — "gliding" between pitches — serve to deepen the emotional impact of the musical performance.

The same is true when playing lines on the guitar, and this can be achieved by incorporating various articulation techniques, such as string bends, finger slides, hammer-ons, pull-offs and vibrato. When utilizing a slide, there are other inherent articulation techniques that cannot be achieved without it. In either scenario, it's helpful to imagine that the guitar is "singing" the words as well as the notes, as this will guide one to shape each note in a most musical way.

As we did last month, let's use the Elmore James blues classic "It Hurts Me too" as our template for further exploration. Elmore is one of the most expressive singers ever, so emulating his vocal delivery on the guitar will sound great, though doing so does pose some challenges.

FIGURE 1 illustrates a melodic line akin to the song's second verse, fretted conventionally, without the slide. As was the case in last month's examples, the melodic elements of the vocal fall on beats 1 and 4 here while a supplemental rhythm part is added in the spaces, on beats 2 and 3. I choose to fingerpick the lines instead of using a pick, as I find that this affords a greater variety in the timbre of each note.

When playing the single-note phrases on beats 1 and 4, notice that almost every note is altered in some way, either with a bend, vibrato or pull-off. These techniques provide movement and direction as each phrase is stated and aid in telling a more musical story.

In bar 7, across beats 2, 3 and 4, a chromatically descending turnaround is played based on pairs of notes that are 6ths apart: the 6ths are fretted on the A and G strings, and the open high E string serves as a repeating pedal tone as the shape descends.

FIG. 1

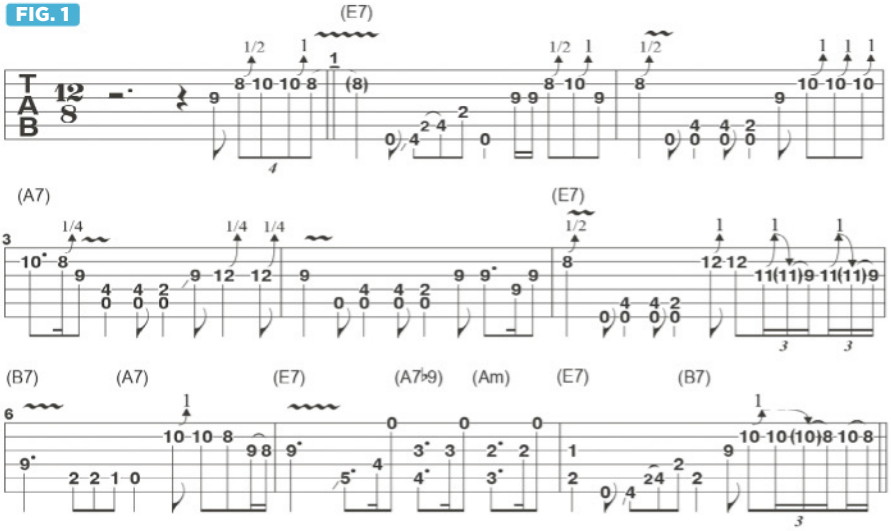
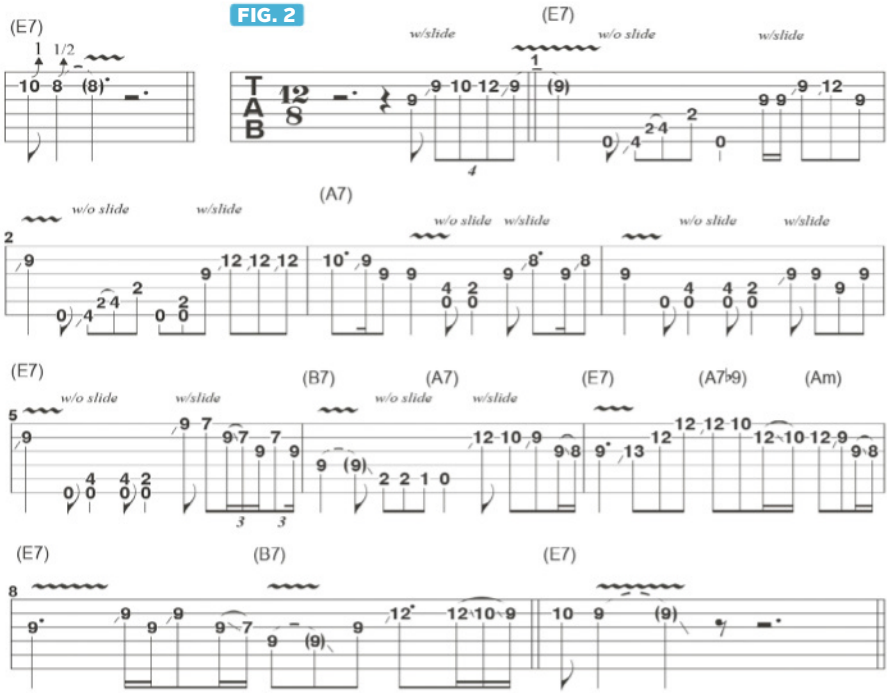


FIG. 2



Now let's reinterpret the melody with a slide. As shown in **FIGURE 2**, the slide is only used to sound the melodic phrases that fall on beats 1 and 4, with finger fretting used to add the rhythm part sounded on the bottom two strings. As before, my goal here is to accentuate the qualities that the slide affords, such as gliding smoothly between pitches or adding wide, expressive vibratos both above and below the target pitch.

While most of the slide phrases are played in the same position as those played without the slide, in bar 5 I chose to move the phrase from the B and G strings over to the top two strings, as this creates a different quality to the vocal melody.

***GW* associate editor Andy Aledort's latest album, *Light of Love*, is available now.**

ALISON HASBACH

TALES FROM NERDVILLE

by Joe Bonamassa

For video of this lesson, go to guitarworld.com/february2024

TOOLS OF THE TRADE, PART 11

1962/63 Gibson Les Paul/SG with Bigsby

FOR ME, THE Gibson SG was a guitar that took me about 30 years to figure out. For the longest time, I wasn't able to get on with SGs. I found that the balance of the instrument always felt a little off — they were often headstock-heavy — and it often sounded a little too bright for my taste.

About five years ago, I happened to come across a really good one and had an epiphany. I decided, "I'm going to commit to getting it together on the SG, and the best way to do that is to start performing with it." Since then, I've been using them all the time onstage and in the studio. This revolutionized my way of looking at a humbucker-equipped guitar. What I found was that there are a few tricks to getting an SG to sound the way I wanted it to.

Today's tool of the trade is a Les Paul/SG that I refer to as my "Mick Taylor" guitar because Mick was known for playing a 1962/63 Les Paul/SG during his late Sixties/early Seventies tenure in the Rolling Stones. It's a PAF-equipped guitar, meaning it's fitted with "patent applied for" Gibson pickups. In 1960, the single-cutaway Les Paul was replaced with the thinner double-cutaway version but for a time was still referred to as a "Les Paul Standard" by Gibson. In 1963, Gibson temporarily suspended their relationship with Mr. Les Paul, at which time the instrument became known simply as the SG, which stands for solid guitar.

Another twist with today's instrument is that it's fitted with a "horseshoe" Bigsby vibrato unit, like Taylor's guitar. Some people don't get on with what I like to call the "5-speed transmission," but I happen to like them. My Tommy Bolin guitar has a horseshoe Bigsby too.

My trick with the SG is in regard to its bridge pickup tone knob: I set it on "5" and pretend that that's "10." My reasoning for this is that I find that this setting balances better with the neck pickup with its tone on "10." This way, I can switch back and forth between pickups, and the guitar provides the exact sound I'm looking for.

In **FIGURE 1**, I'm using the bridge pickup with the tone on "10." These licks, as well as those in **FIGURE 2** and **3**, are based primarily on the E minor pentatonic scale (E, G, A, B, D). The sound is great, but it's a bit strident. In **FIGURE 2**, I've got the tone rolled back to "5," which retains the necessary "cut" but sounds more full-bodied. In **FIGURE 3**, I switch to the neck pickup with the tone on "10," and, to my ears, I still have the aggression of the treble but more of the typical warmth the neck pickup provides.

I find the SG to be a versatile guitar and completely different from a Les Paul. The double cutaway, where the neck meets the body and the positioning of the pickups make the SG its own animal.

FIG. 1 bridge pickup, tone on "10"

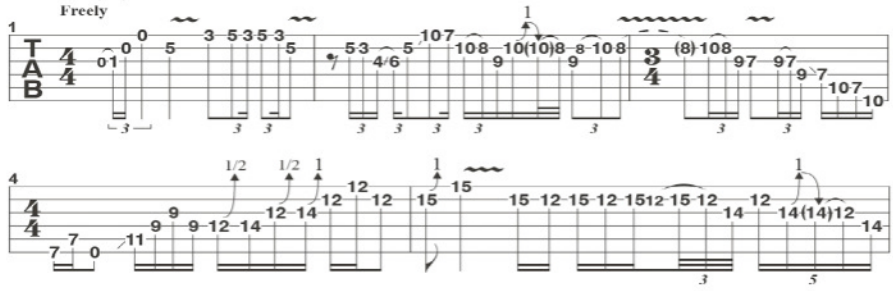


FIG. 2 bridge pickup, tone on "5"

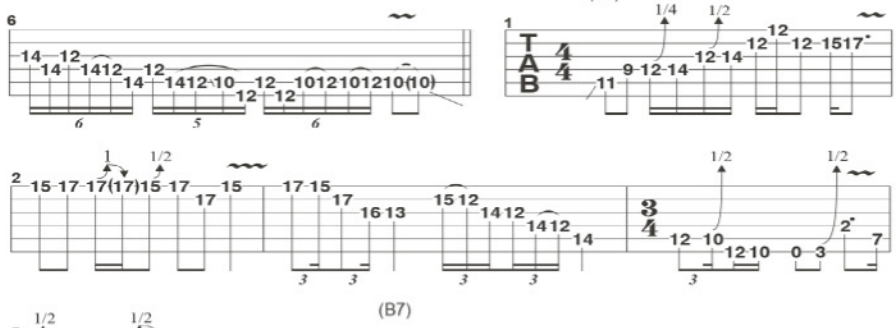
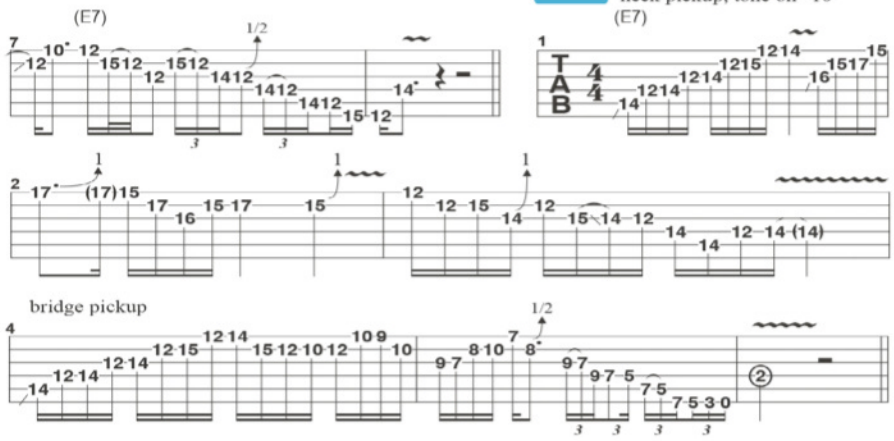


FIG. 3 neck pickup, tone on "10"



Joe Bonamassa is one of the world's most popular blues-rock guitarists — not to mention a top producer and *de facto* ambassador of the blues.

JEFF FASANO

MELODIC MUSE

by Andy Timmons

For video of this lesson, go to guitarworld.com/february2024

POSITION PLAYER

Utilizing position shifts in "Ghost of You"

FOR THE NEXT few columns, I'd like to present my song "Ghost of You," which I recorded with the Andy Timmons Band for our 2006 album, *Resolution*. This proved to be a very pivotal record for me, as it marked a point when I really began digging into "tone questing," and it was also the first record where I did not include any overdubs. There's just one guitar, backed by bass and drums throughout the entire record. It proved to be a transitional turning point for me because this is how I've since recorded every album.

FIGURE 1 illustrates the tune's opening 16-bar "verse" melody. It's played at a moderate tempo and with a swing-16ths feel, which means that the pairs of 16th notes on each downbeat and eighth-note upbeat are played like the first and third notes of a 16th-note triplet.

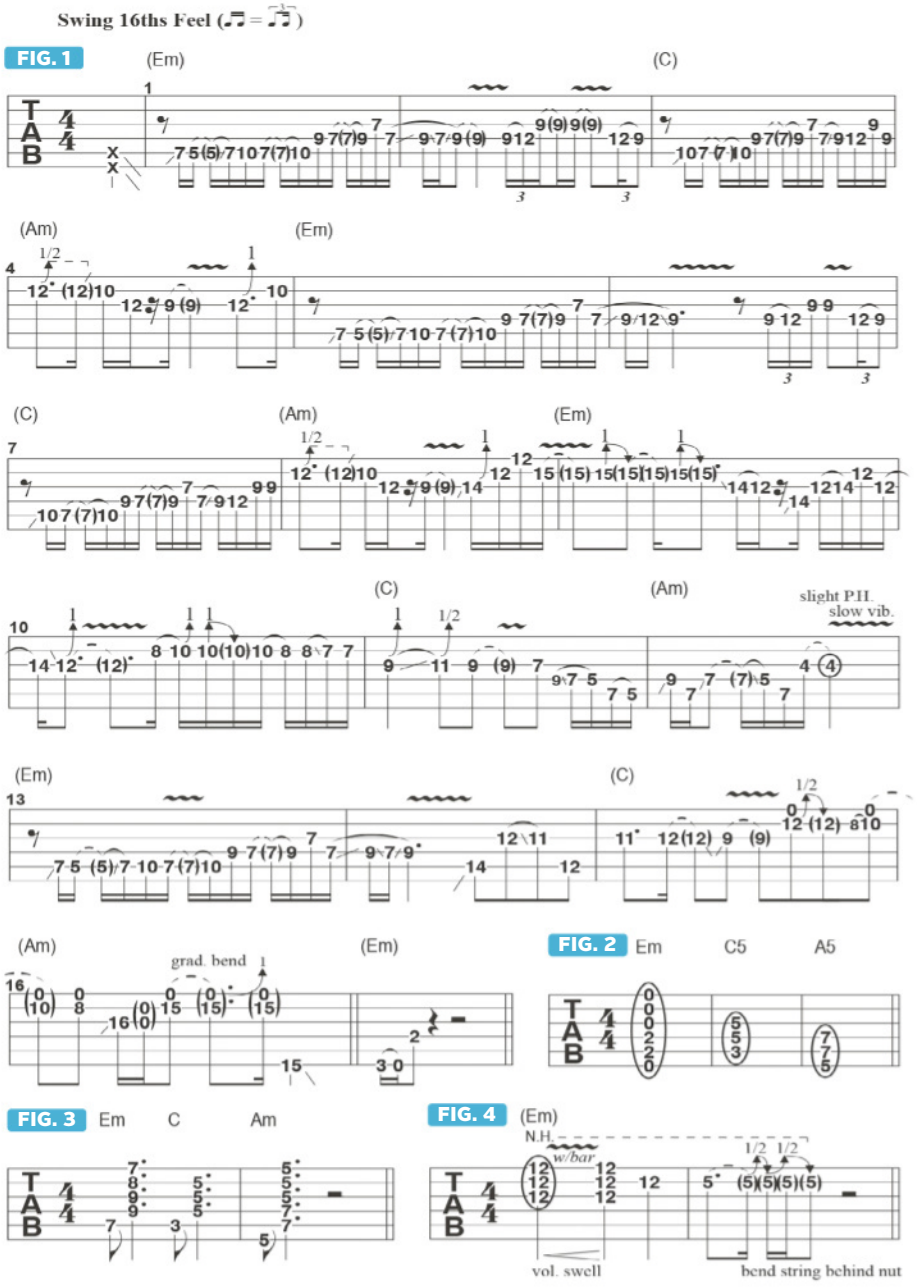
Most of the melody is based on the E minor pentatonic scale (E, G, A, B, D), though reference is made in bars 4, 7, 10, 11, 14 15 to the E Aeolian mode (E, F♯, G, A, B, C, D), which adds F♯ and C. E Aeolian works well with the underlying chord progression, Em - C - Am, as it includes the triadic tones for each chord: Em (E, G, B), C (C, E, G) and Am (A, C, E).

FIGURE 2 shows "power chord" versions of these chords, and **FIGURE 3** depicts full triadic voicings of Em, C, Am. During the song's intro, I add some atmospheric sounds prior to kicking off the verse section. As shown in **FIGURE 4**, I begin with natural harmonics (N.H.) at the 12th fret and strike the strings with the volume off. I then roll up the volume and add some bar vibrato.

In bar 2 of **FIGURE 4**, I play a natural harmonic at the B string's 5th fret, sounding a high B note, which I then repeatedly bend up a half step to C by pushing down on the string behind the nut. This technique has been used to great effect by players like Jimmy Page and Jimi Hendrix, among many others, so I encourage you to experiment with it.

Let's go back to **FIGURE 1** and look at how I chose to articulate the verse melody. Instead of just fretting the notes in a single position, I utilize unusual shifts on each string, so that each note is articulated in a specific way. For example, after playing the first two notes, E and D, at the 7th and 5th frets on the A string, I slide from D up to E with my 1st finger so that I can fret the next note, G, on the A string with my pinkie. This move allows me to then easily shift up to 9th position in bar 2.

In bar 3, over an implied C chord, I begin in 7th position with the notes G and E then shift up to 10th position in bar 4 over Am. Bars 5-7 are essentially recaps of bars 1-4, followed in bar 8 by a shift up to 12th position. The lines in bars 9-16 are executed with an abundance of shifts, all chosen to allow each note to "speak" with emotion and individuality.



Andy Timmons is a world-renowned guitarist known for his work with the Andy Timmons Band, Danger Danger and Simon Phillips. Check out his new instructional course, "The Art of Story Telling."

SIMONE CECHETTI

LIVE FROM FLAT V

by Josh Smith

For video of this lesson, go to guitarworld.com/february2024

PUTTING IN THE REPS

More on using repetition as a phrase-building technique

AS I STATED last month, three tools I like to use to build soloing ideas are repetition, call-and-response and "handcuffs." I began this discussion by demonstrating various ways to utilize repetition as a phrase-building tool. In this lesson, I'll present some more ways to use repetition as an effective soloing springboard.

Last month, I illustrated how to take a simple B.B. King- or Albert Collins-type phrase and repeat it with slight variations. This month, I'd like to focus on repeating a rhythmic *motif* (short idea) but with different notes. In this way, it's the rhythm of the line that creates the catchy hook.

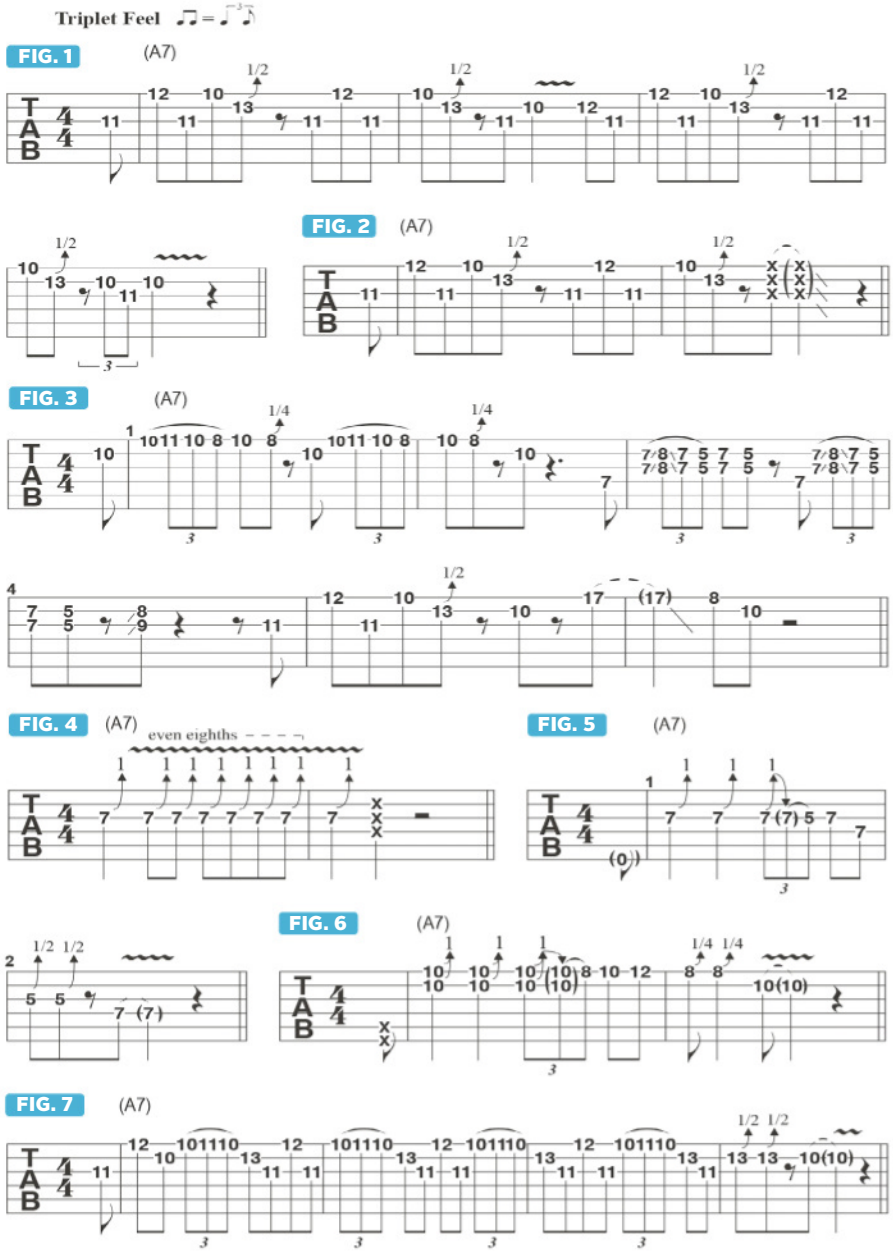
FIGURE 1 is a B.B. King-style lick, played in the key of A in the classic 10th-position "B.B. box." For those unfamiliar, the "B.B. box" is recognized as a fretboard shape wherein the index finger frets the root note on the B string, in this case, A at the 10th fret. The other notes found in the box are generally a combination of minor and major pentatonic tones (A minor pentatonic: A, C, D, E, G; A major pentatonic: A, B, C♯, E, F♯). The important hook to this riff is the rhythm. The riff is a five-note phrase that initially starts on the upbeat of beat 4 in the pickup bar, but then it begins again on the upbeat of beat 3 in bars 1 and 3. The hook is that we hear a recognizable, repeating melody but it continually falls in different places in the measure.

Let's say we begin with the basic phrase, as shown in **FIGURE 2**; we can then "answer" it by "borrowing" its rhythm to create the melodic phrases shown in **FIGURE 3**. Bar 1 sounds a quick hammer/pull lick between D, E♭, D and C, followed by D and C. In bar 3, I move the idea down an octave and use two-note double stops, sounding the notes D, E♭, D and C on the G string along with the notes at the same frets on the B string: F♯, G, F♯ and E. And, akin to **FIGURE 1**, this phrase "flips" from beat 1 to beat 4 in bar 3.

There are so many cool ways to utilize repetition with different notes. Along with repeating the rhythmic syncopation of a phrase, one can also repeat oneself dynamically, which will create another type of hook. By playing the repeating vibrato-ed bends in **FIGURE 4**, we've set a certain style of dynamic by picking hard and bending and shaking the string.

If I were to start a solo with **FIGURE 5**, I can follow it by playing virtually the same idea an octave higher, but this time with bent double-stops in the place of single notes, as in **FIGURE 6**. The note choices differ, but both phrases have the same dynamic punch, and I've created an effective hook. **FIGURE 7** offers another example of twisting a melodic phrase into different rhythmic syncopations.

As you play around with these ideas, you'll find that repetition is a great way to get people, even non-musicians, to be drawn to what you're playing.



Josh Smith is a highly respected blues-country-jazz master and all-around tone wizard. His new album, 2022's *Bird of Passage*, is out now.

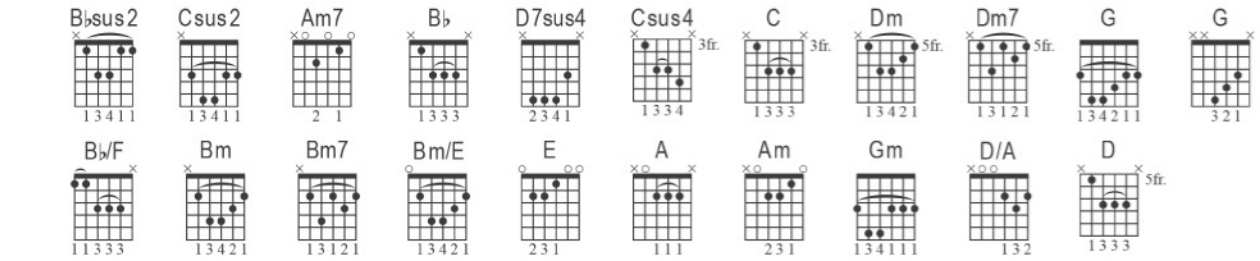
OLLY CURTIS/FUTURE

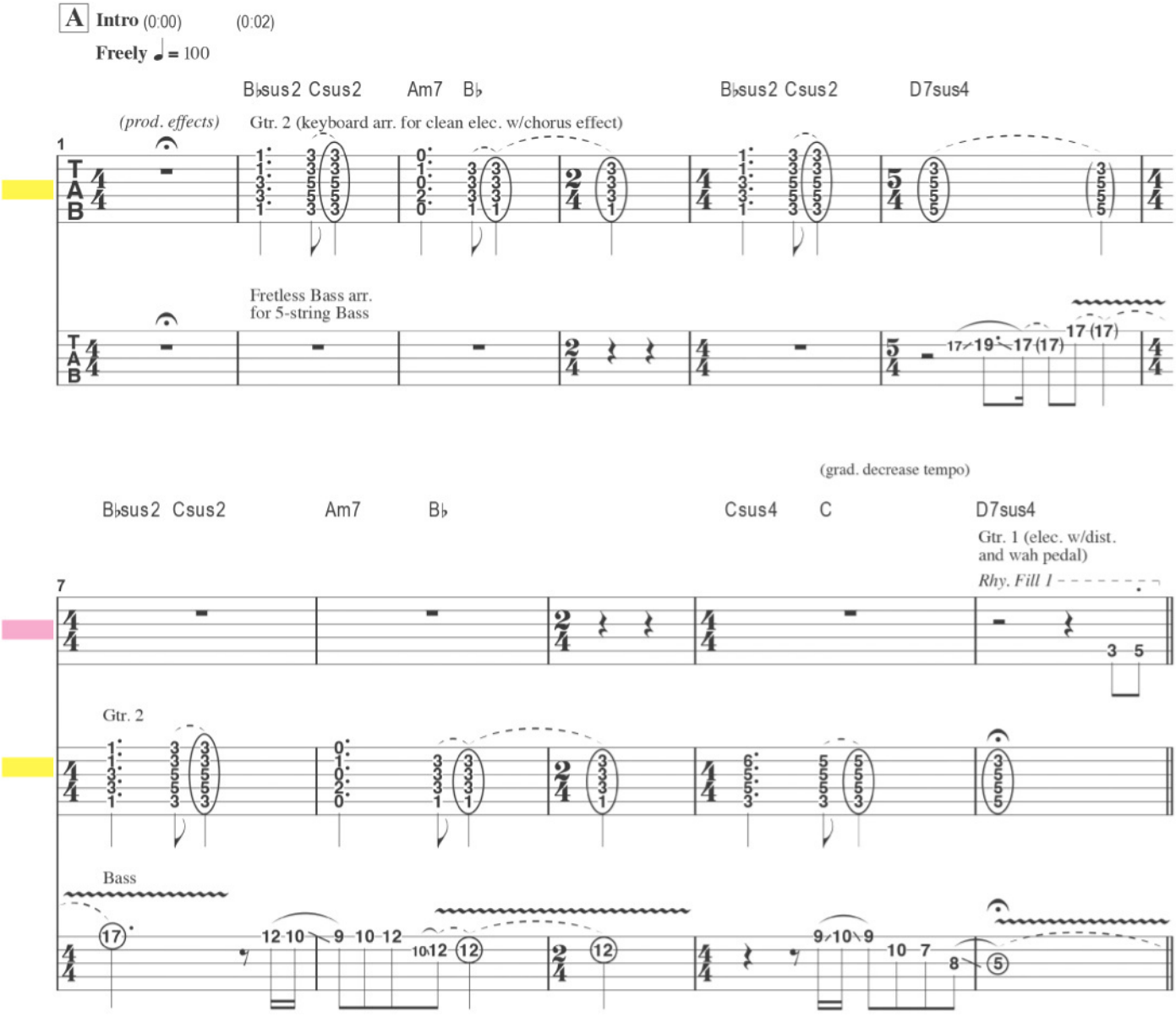
"BAD LOVE"

Eric Clapton

As heard on **JOURNEYMAN**

Words and Music by ERIC CLAPTON *and* MICK JONES • *Transcribed by* JEFF PERRIN





"BAD LOVE"
WORDS AND MUSIC BY ERIC CLAPTON AND MICK JONES.
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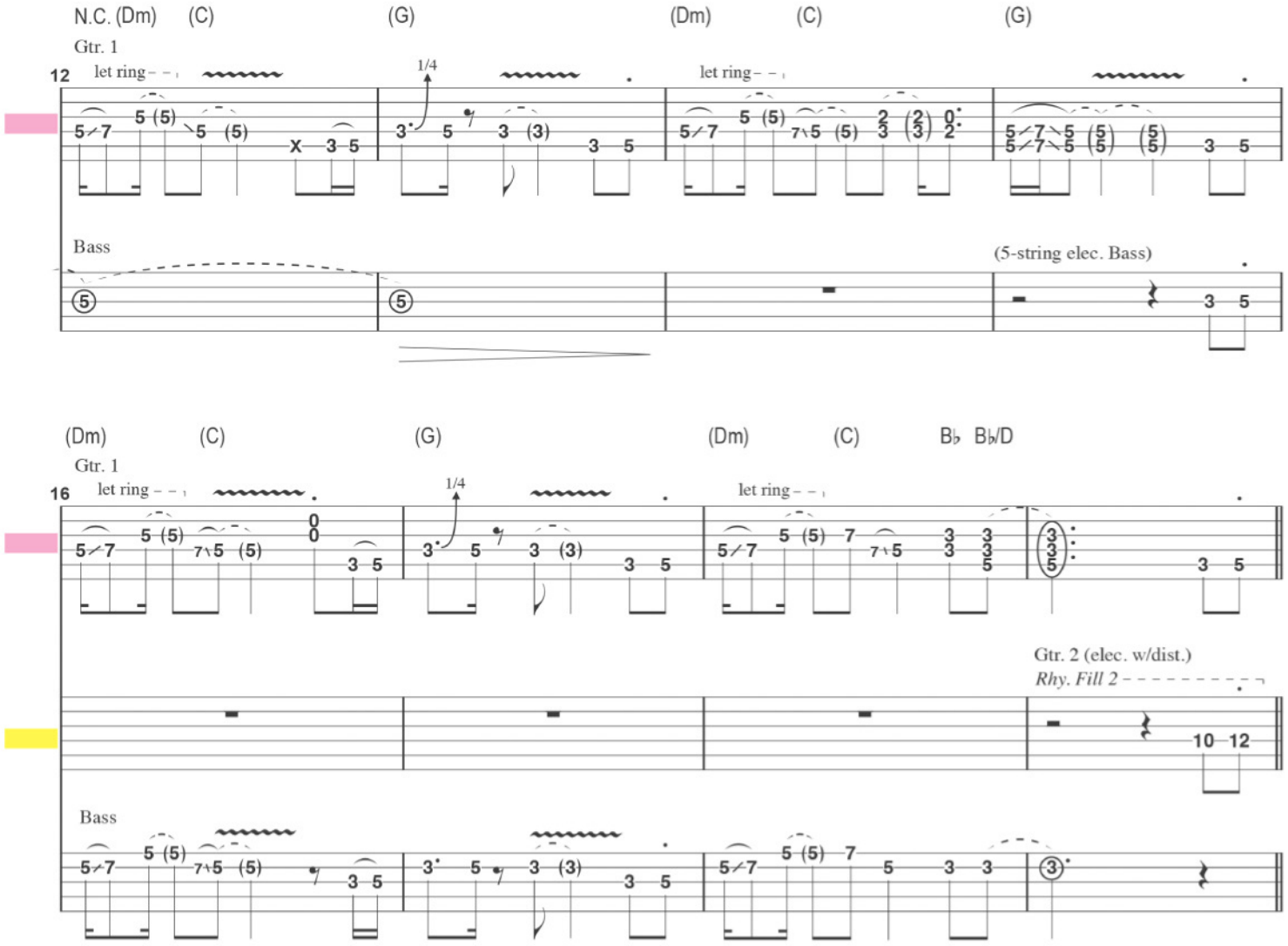
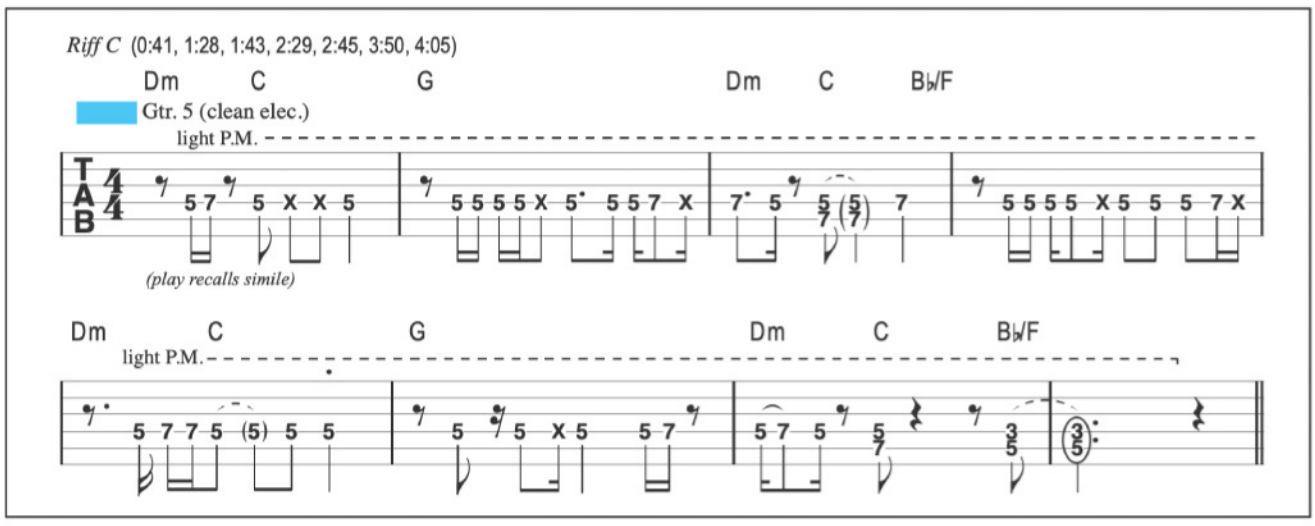
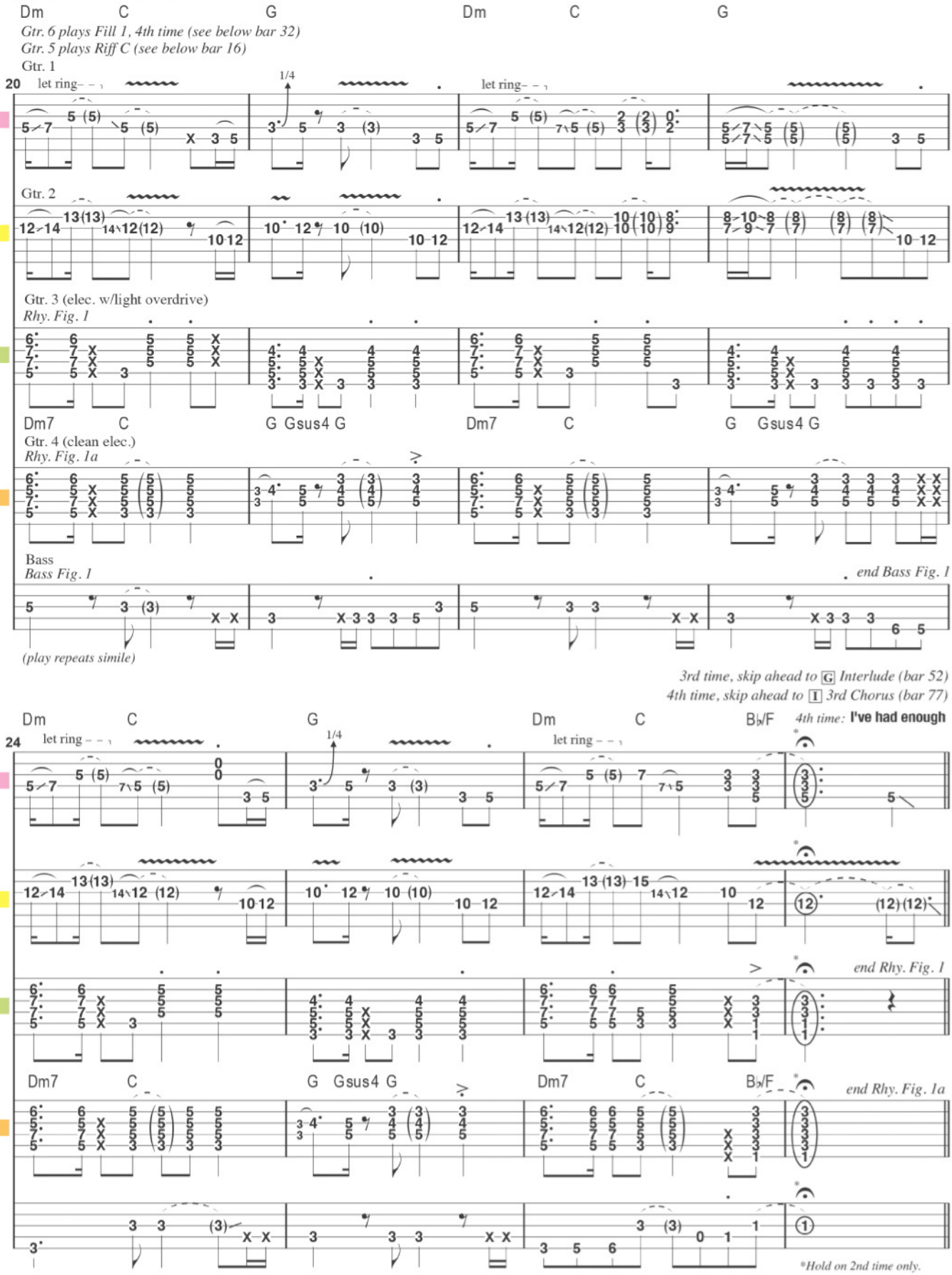
B (0:25)

Moderately Fast ♩ = 124





C (0:41, 1:43, 2:45, 3:50)



D **Verses** (0:57, 1:58)

1. Oh what a feeling I get when I'm with you
2. And now I see that my life has been so blue

Bm Bm/E E A

Gtr. 1

28

Gtr. 3

Rhy. Fig. 2 *end Rhy. Fig. 2*

Bm7 E A

Gtr. 4

Rhy. Fig. 2a *end Rhy. Fig. 2a*

Bass

You take my heart into everything you do And it
With all the heartaches I had 'til I met you But I'm

Bm Bm/E E A

Gtr. 3 plays Rhy. Fig. 2 (see bar 28)
Gtr. 4 plays Rhy. Fig. 2a (see bar 28)

Gtr. 1

32

Bass

Fill 1 (3:50)

Gtr. 6

Rhy. Fill 3 (1:18, 2:20)

Dm Dsus2

Gtr. 5 (clean elec. w/chorus effect)

let ring

Bass Fill 1 (3:46)

C D G

E **Pre-chorus** (1:12, 2:14)

makes me sad for the lonely people I walked that road for so long Now I
glad to say now that's all behind me With you here by my side And there's

B♭ C Am B♭ Gm C Dm

Gtr. 5 plays Rhy. Fill 3 (see below bar 34)

36 Gtr. 1

Gtr. 3

Gtr. 4

Bass

know that I'm one of the lucky people Your love is making me strong (I've) had enough
no more memories to remind me Your love will keep me alive (I've) had enough

B♭ C Am B♭ Gm C G

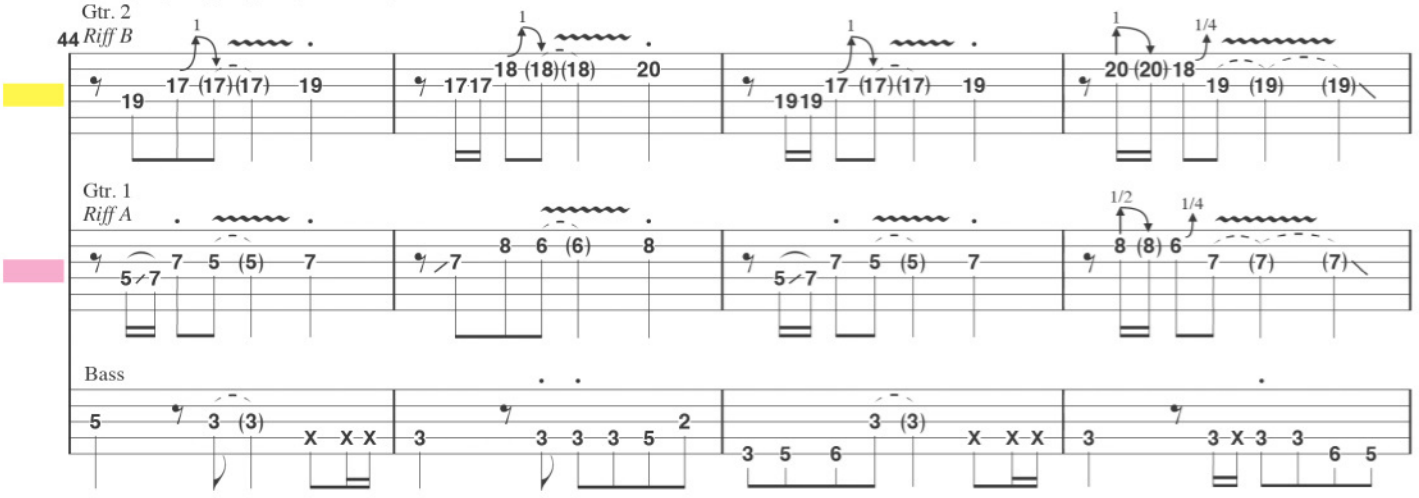
40

F **1st and 2nd Choruses** (1:28, 2:29)

of bad love I need something I can be proud of I've had enough

Dm C G Dm C G

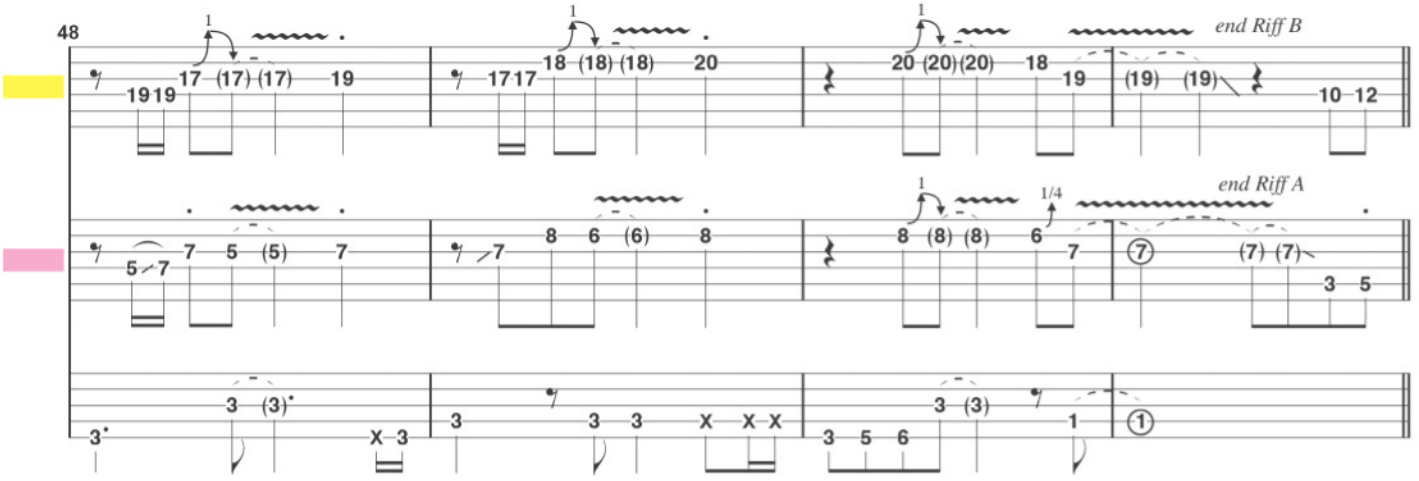
Gtr. 5 plays Riff C (see below bar 16)
Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 1 (see bar 20)
Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 1a (see bar 20)



Go back to **C** *(bar 20)*

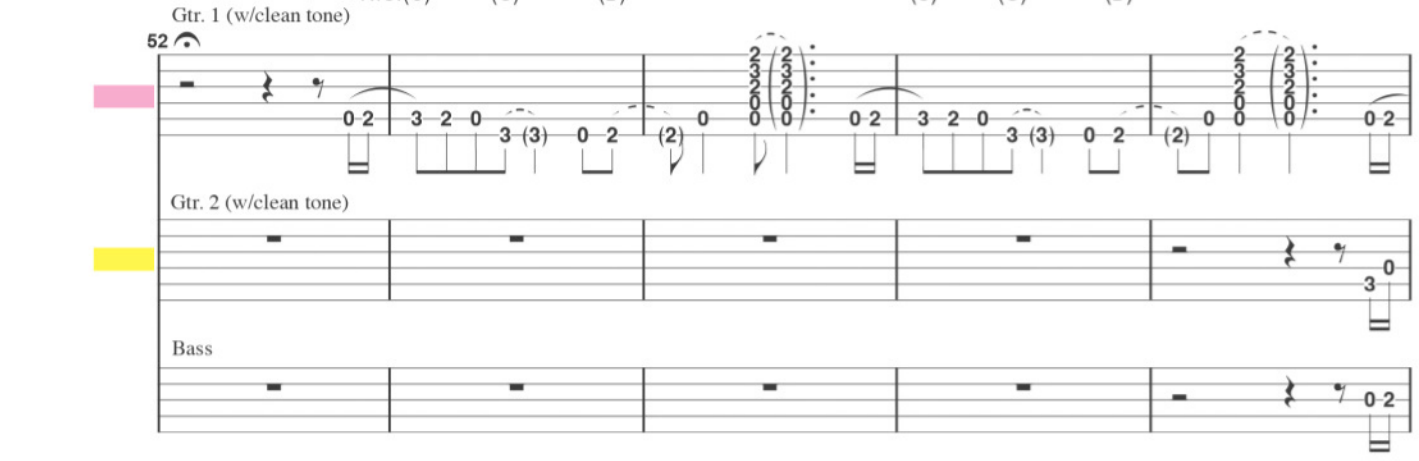
of bad love No more bad love

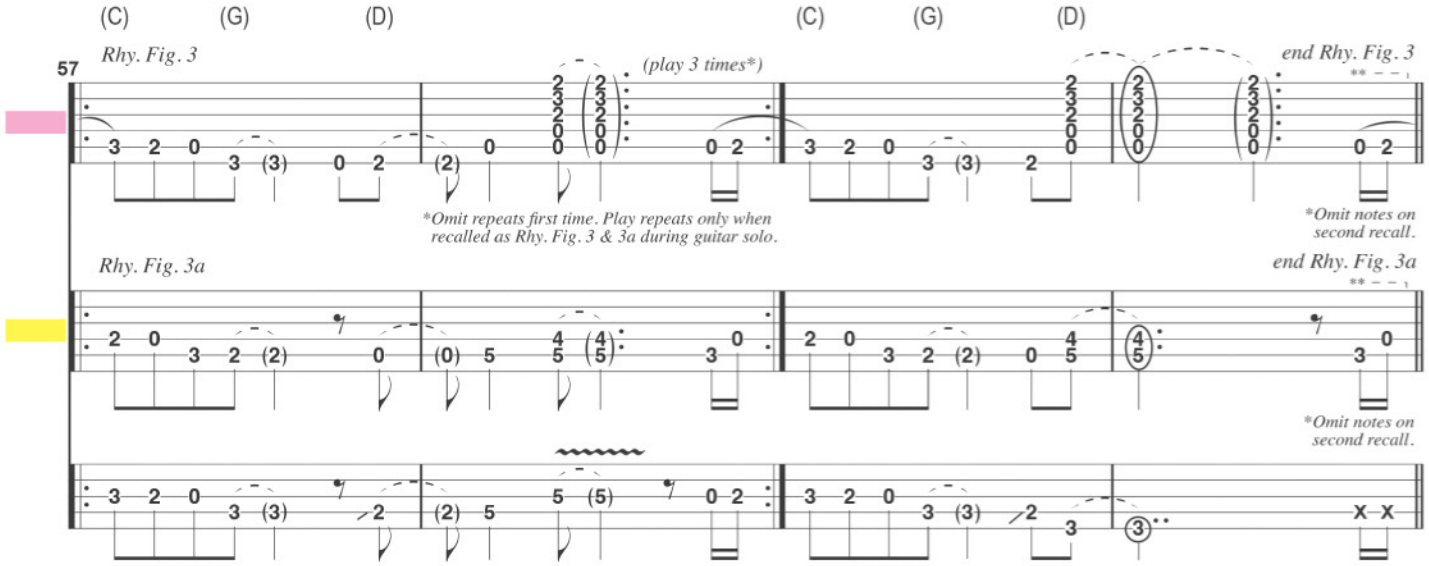
Dm C G Dm C B♭/F



G **Interlude** (2:58)

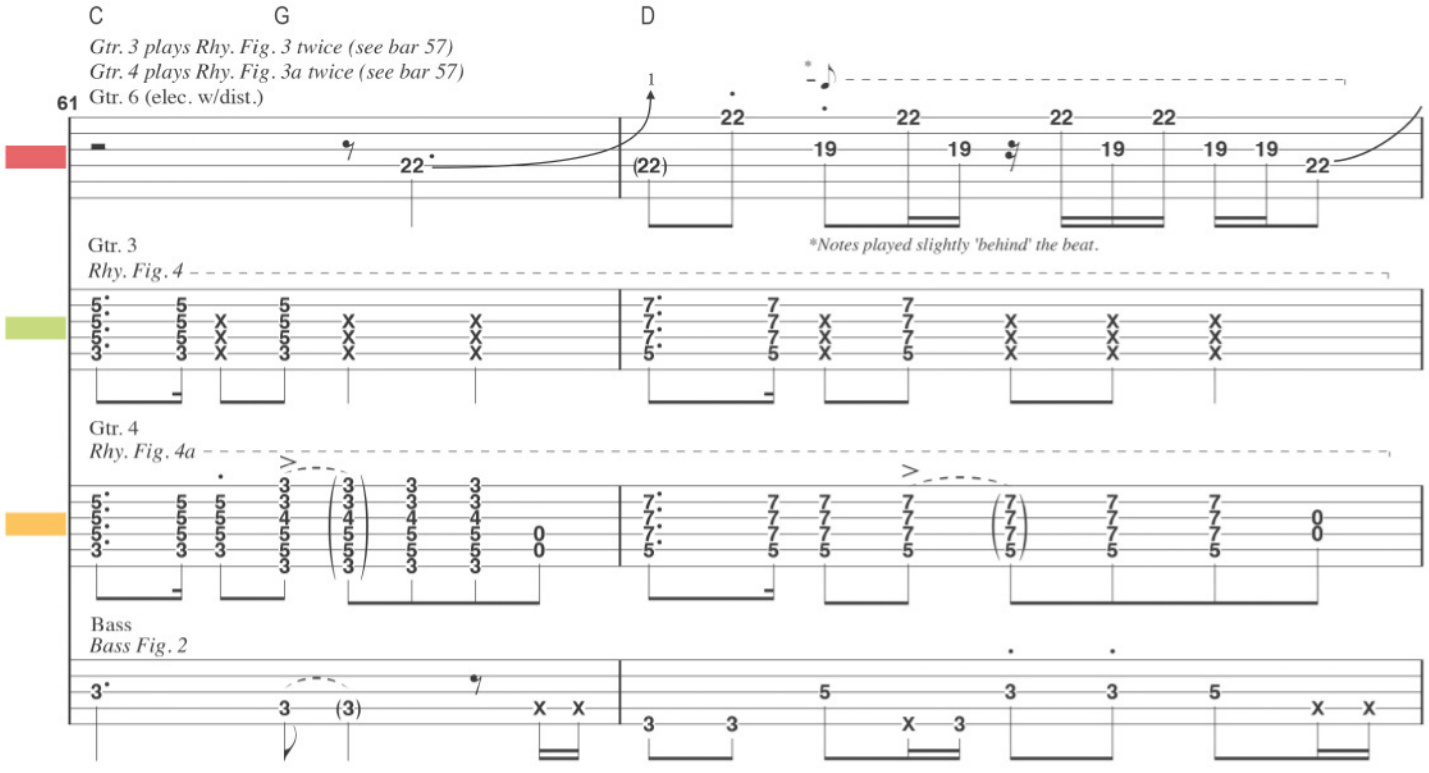
N.C.(C) (G) (D) (C) (G) (D)

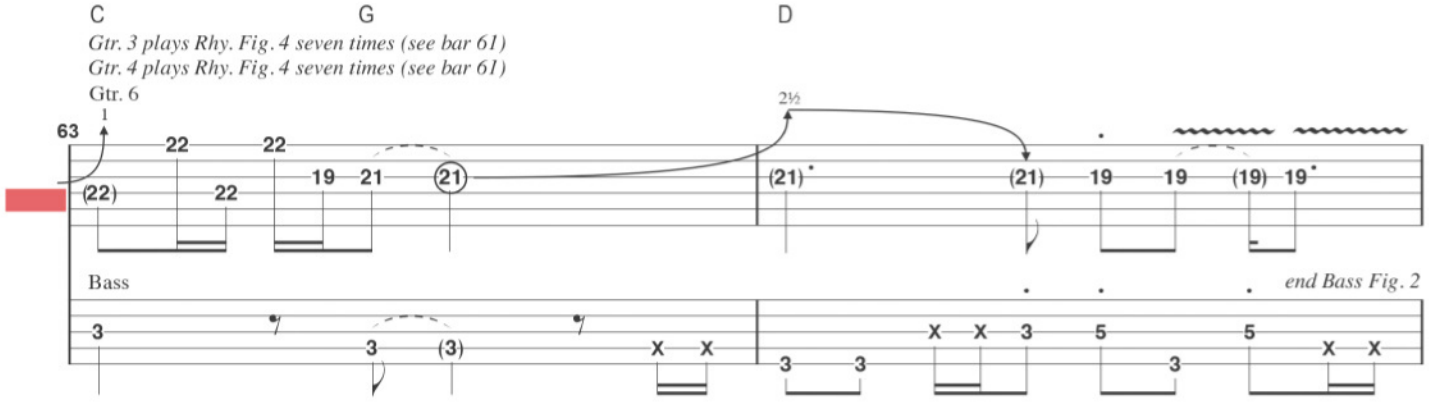


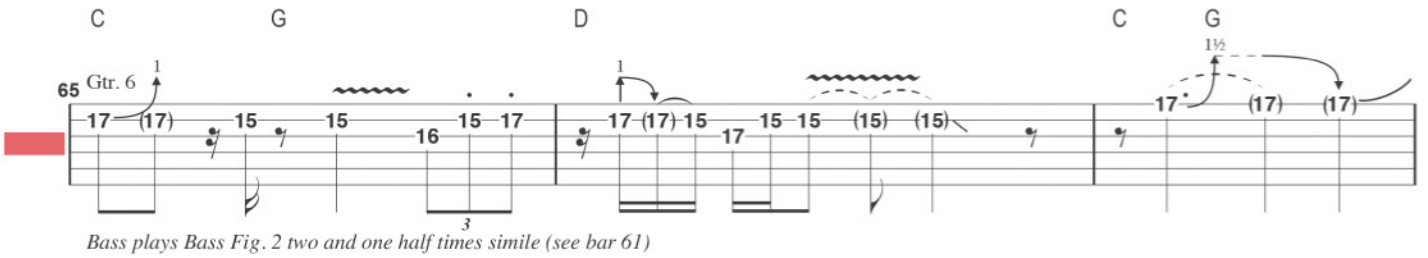


H Guitar Solo (3:20)

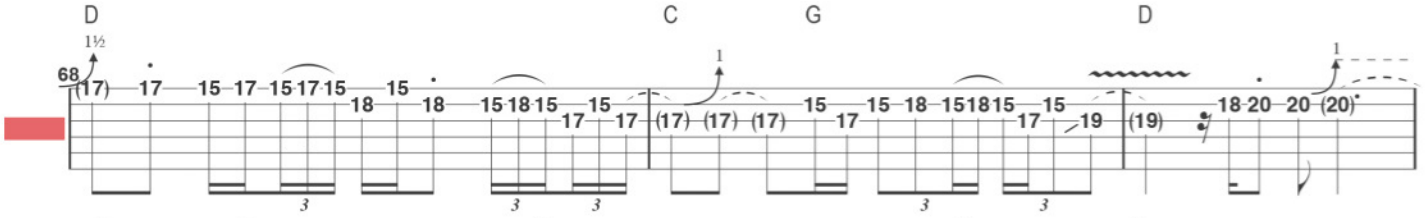
Grad. increase tempo to ♩= **126**

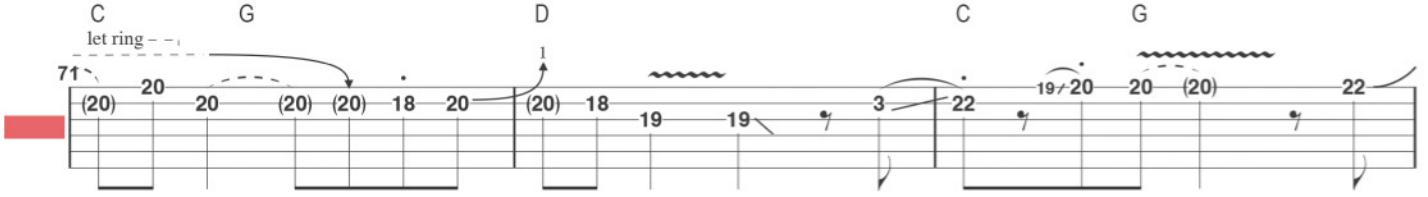




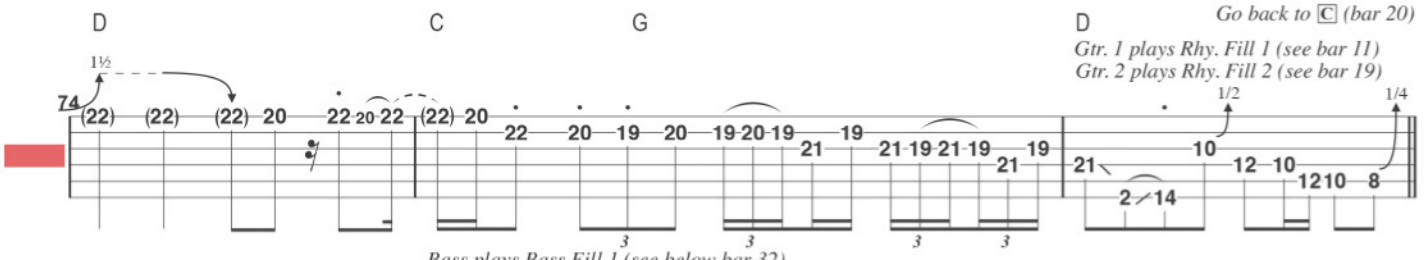


Bass plays Bass Fig. 2 two and one half times simile (see bar 61)





Go back to C (bar 20)



Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fill 1 (see bar 11)
Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fill 2 (see bar 19)

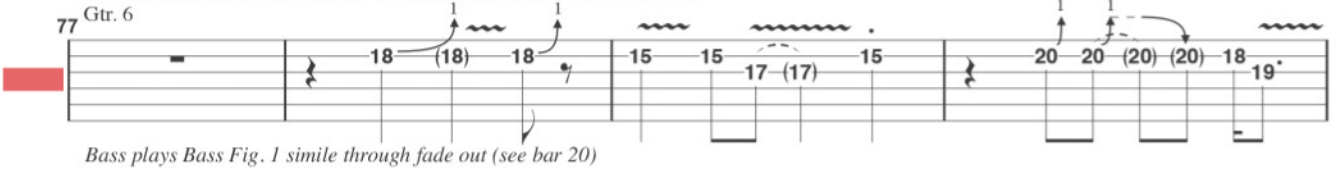
Bass plays Bass Fill 1 (see below bar 32)

I 3rd Chorus (4:05)

of bad love I need something I can be proud of I've had enough

Dm C G Dm C G

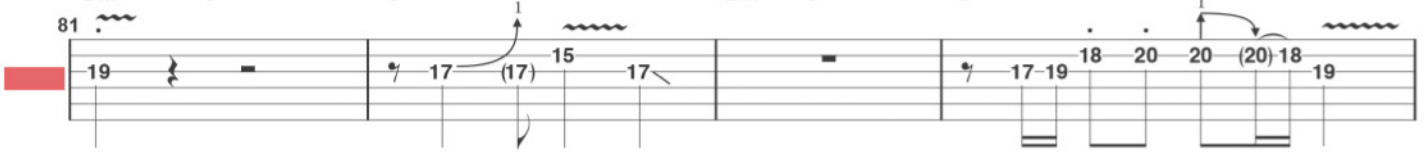
Gtr. 1 plays Riff A through fade out (see bar 44)
Gtr. 2 plays Riff B through fade out (see bar 44)
Gtr. 3 plays first four bars of Rhy. Fig. 1 through fade out (see bar 20)
Gtr. 4 plays first four bars of Rhy. Fig. 1a through fade out (see bar 20)
Gtr. 5 plays first four bars of Riff C through fade out (see below bar 16)



Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 simile through fade out (see bar 20)

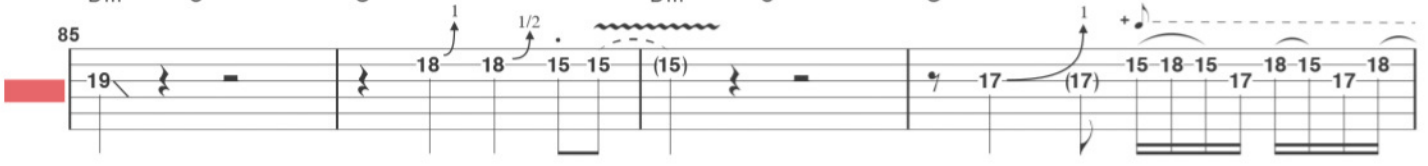
of bad love No more bad love I've had enough

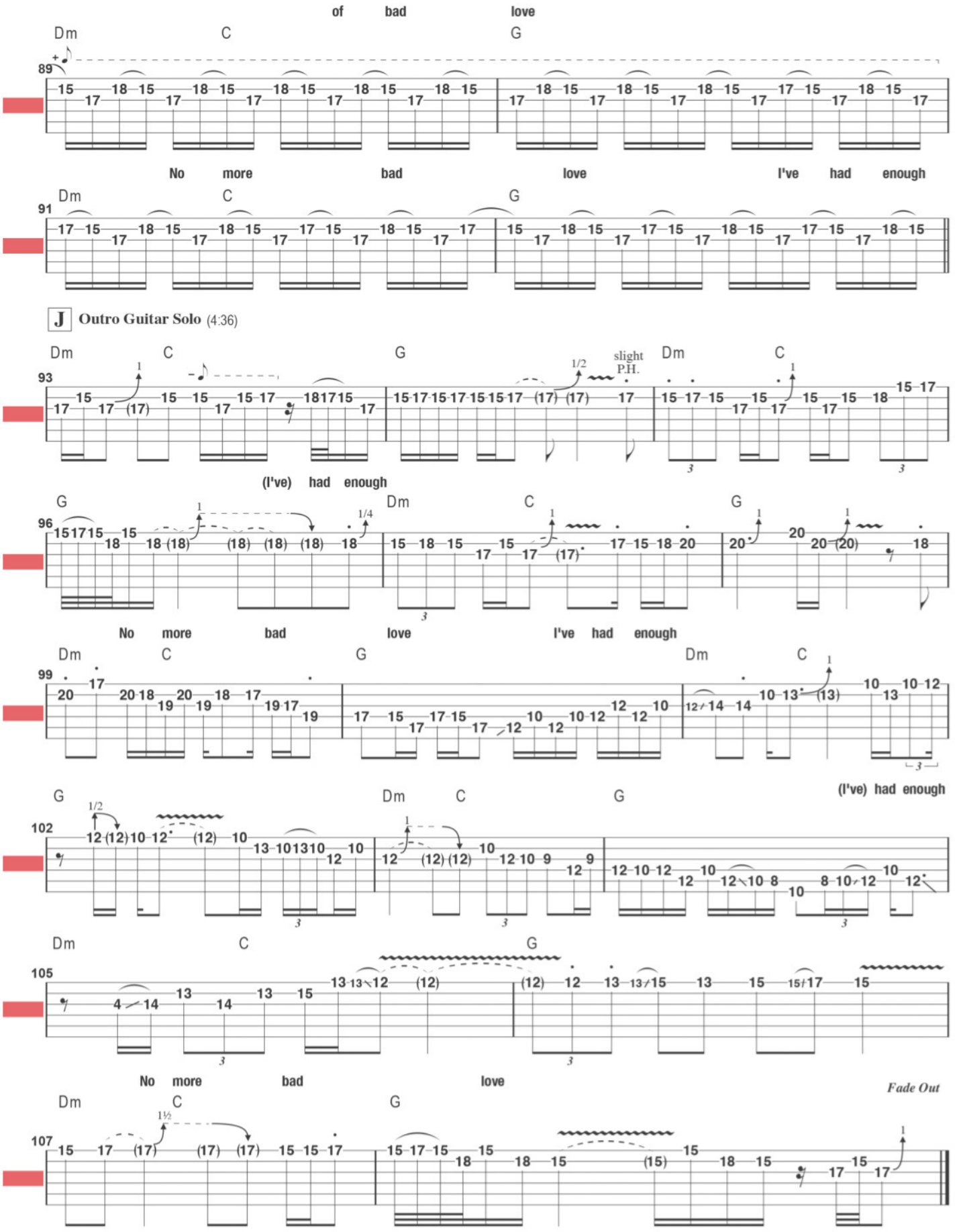
Dm C G Dm C G



of bad love I need something I can be proud of I had enough

Dm C G Dm C G




of bad love
Dm C G
89
No more bad love I've had enough
Dm C G
91
J Outro Guitar Solo (4:36)
Dm C G
93
slight P.H.
Dm C
(I've) had enough
G Dm C G
96
No more bad love I've had enough
Dm C G Dm C
99
(I've) had enough
G Dm C G
102
Dm C G
105
No more bad love
Fade Out
Dm C G
107

Performance Notes

HOW TO PLAY THIS MONTH'S SONGS **By Jimmy Brown**

"BAD LOVE"

Eric Clapton

WIDELY HAILED AS one of the highpoints of Eric Clapton's long, illustrious career, this hit song from 1989 finds the guitarist-vocalist in top form, as he turns in an inspired, fiery performance that brings to mind his earlier work on the epic 1970 track "Layla," with Derek and the Dominos, and on the late Cream classic "Badge," from 1969.

Following a dreamy synth and fretless bass intro, the song's main guitar riff gets under way at 0:25 (see section B, bar 12), with Clapton artfully employing a wah pedal to impart vocal-like inflections to a soulful melody that's based on the D minor pentatonic scale (D, F, G, A, C).

Notice Clapton's use of quick, decorative finger slides in the main riff, which lend the line added soulfulness. He utilizes his 3rd finger for both the upward and downward single-note slides between G and A. In bar 15, he uses his 3rd and 4th fingers together for the two-note slide. The rhythm section joins in at section C (bar 20), with Clapton octave-doubling his main riff (see Gtrs. 1 and 2) in a way not unlike what he had done in the intro and chorus riff to "Layla," which is also in the key of D minor. Pay careful attention to the use of subtle quarter-step bends and finger vibratos in these parts, all of which are performed by pushing the string(s) upward, away from the palm.

Clapton boldly begins his solo in an unusual D minor pentatonic box shape *way* up high on the neck, as if celebrating the fact that his modern Stratocaster sports 22 frets. This works out great for the opening C-to-D bend and alternating D-octaves string skipping lick. The whopping two-and-a-half-step bend in bar 64 — from E all the way up to A (!) — is best performed on the G string, due to its lower tension, compared to that of the B or high E. Nonetheless, bending a note that far is a pretty demanding technique. Use your 3rd finger to push the string at the 21st fret and be sure to reinforce it, or back it up, with both your 2nd and 1st fingers, placed one and two frets behind it, while also momentarily hooking your thumb over the top side of the fretboard for anchorage.

"I WANT MY CROWN"

Eric Gales (featuring Joe Bonamassa)

THIS SLICKLY CRAFTED arrangement celebrates modern blues guitar sensation Eric Gales' talent, artistry and technical prowess, and the song is presented as a pretext for a playful lead guitar duel with the equally renowned and accomplished Joe Bonamassa. Both axmen turn in inspired, tastefully ripping solos on their similarly styled instruments (with Joe playing a Fender Stratocaster and Eric sporting his signature Magneto Eric Gales RD-3 guitar), and the exhibition match ends in a satisfying draw.

The contest gets underway after the song's 3rd chorus, at section H. Joe solos first, then he and Eric proceed to trade eight-bar phrases, then "fours," then "twos" over a funky vamp in A, each demonstrating their improvisational creativity and technical virtuosity, with breathtaking displays of smooth, clean alternate picking, bold, precise string bends and shimmering finger vibratos.

Both six-string pugilists base the majority of their solo lines on the A minor pentatonic scale (A, C, D, E, G) but also draw upon other resources to serve up some colorful melodies. For example, check out Bonamassa's chromatic descent on the high E string in bars 63 and 64 — the "A minor-drop line cliche" (A - G♯ - G - F♯) — and Gales' imaginatively winding 16th-note run in bars 79-82, for which he combines notes from the A Mixolydian mode (A, B, C♯, D, E, F♯, G) and the A blues scale (A, C, D, E♭, E, G) and uses hammer-ons, pull-offs and legato finger slides to create a smoothly rolling melodic contour.

Notice also how both improvisers will often utilize adjacent, overlapping "box" patterns of A minor pentatonic within a single phrase and smoothly traverse them, by either sliding audibly or silently shifting a finger up or down a string. Gales' first solo at section I offers some great examples of this approach in action. As always, when sliding, use a light touch and try not to press down on the string any harder than necessary to produce a clear tone, as doing so will only increase friction and drag, making the slide needlessly difficult.

"JAILBREAK"

Thin Lizzy

SHOWCASING THE MUSCULAR hard-rock riffing of Brian Robertson and Scott Gorham, with both guitarists sporting matching Les Pauls plugged into cranked Marshall stacks, this title track from Thin Lizzy's 1976 breakout album presents the band's quintessential twin-guitars lineup performing one of their simplest yet most powerful and popular songs. With charismatic songwriter, vocalist, and pick-style bassist Phil Lynott leading the charge and drummer Brian Downey laying down a driving eighth-note groove throughout the arrangement, the boys serve up a suite of punchy, hooky riffs that are built from either root-5th power chords or single-note ensemble melodies.

Per their signature modus operandi, Roberton and Gorham take a "complimentary doubling" approach to their rhythm parts, playing mostly identical riffs and accompaniments while in spots employing different voicings of the same chord in overlapping registers — for example, see the opening E5 — or playing the very same notes but on different strings, as with the B5 chord at the beginning of the chorus (see section D, bar 22). The result is slightly contrasting timbres that together form a huge wall of sound. The two six-stringers similarly approach their lead parts (Gtrs. 3 and 4), mostly doubling each other and skillfully synchronizing the quivers of their finger vibratos, then splitting off into harmony notes in a couple of spots, namely over the held E5 chord at the end of the interlude (in bar 69) and during the song's final two bars (72 and 73).

Also noteworthy is the guitarists' effective application of palm muting (P.M.) during the breakdown at section G, where they play a subdued iteration of the haunting single-note line from the end of the preceding chorus. This "hush" moment makes for a dramatic build-up to the climactic chromatic-climb riff that follows at section H. Here, they employ palm muting again, but only to the E and A pedal tones, allowing the higher, unmuted melody notes to "pop." Be sure to downpick all the notes here, to achieve the desired "pumping eighths" sound.

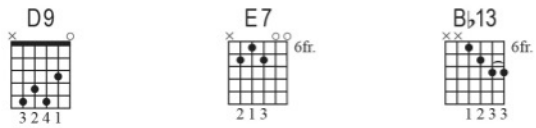
"I WANT MY CROWN"

Eric Gales (featuring Joe Bonamassa)

As heard on **CROWN**

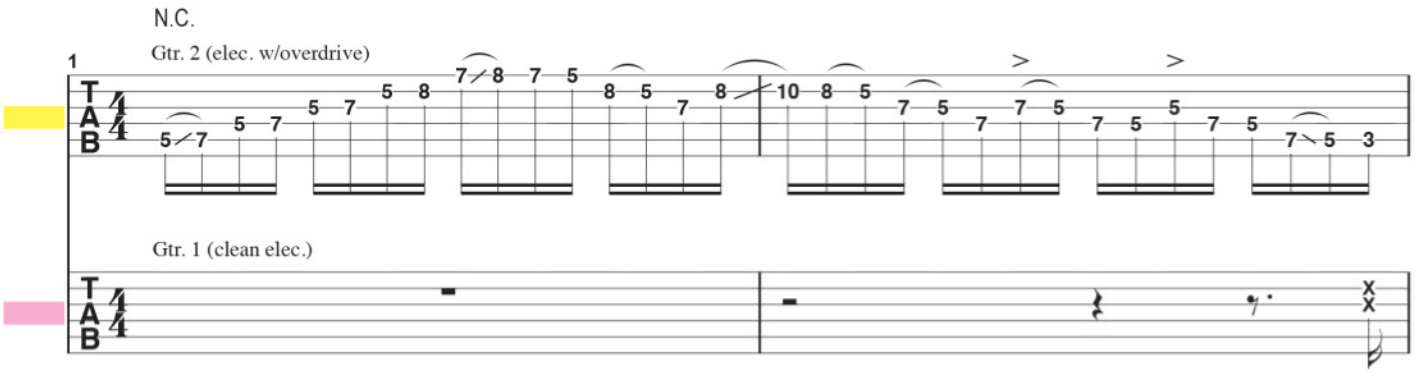
Written by JAMES HOUSE, ERIC GALES *and* JOE BONAMASSA • *Transcribed by* JEFF PERRIN

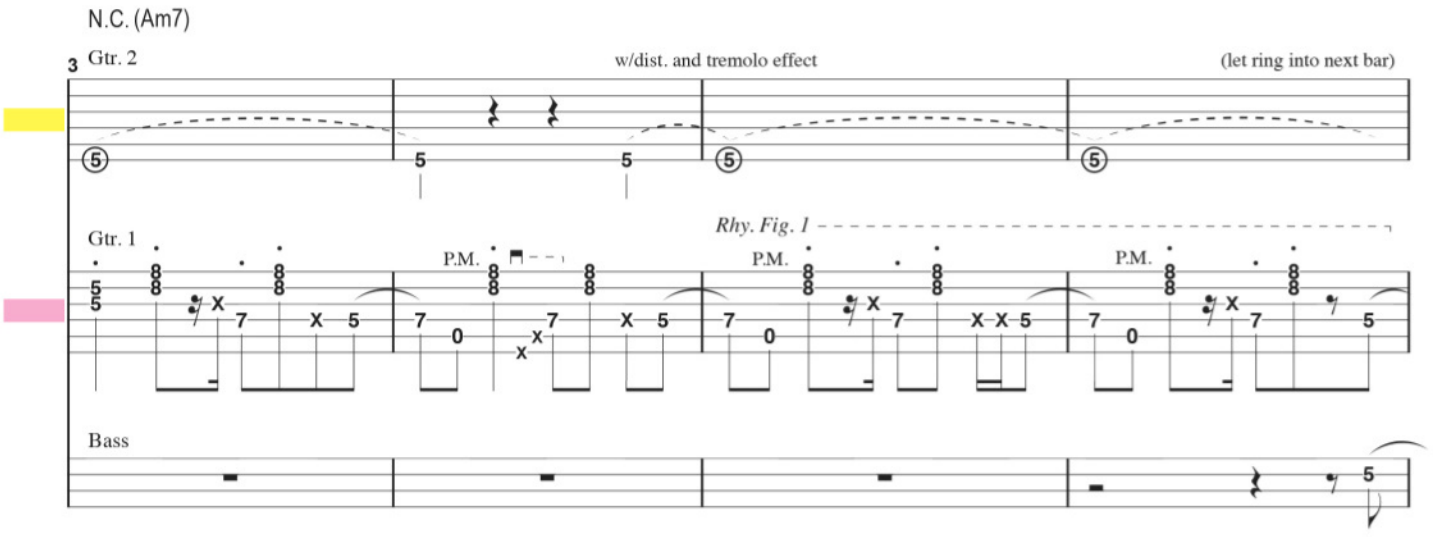
All guitars are tuned down one half step (low to high: E♭, A♭, D♭, G♭, B♭, E♭).
Bass tuning (low to high: E♭, A♭, D♭, G♭).

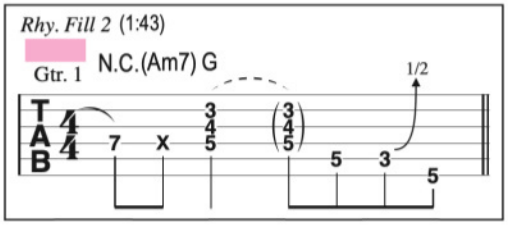


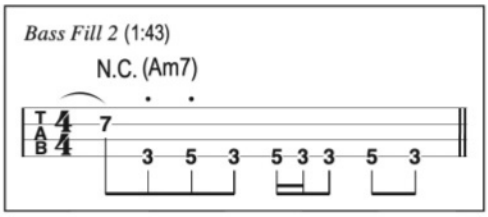
A **Intro** (0:00)

Moderately Fast ♩ = 133









"I WANT MY CROWN"
WRITTEN BY JAMES HOUSE, ERIC GALES AND JOE BONAMASSA.
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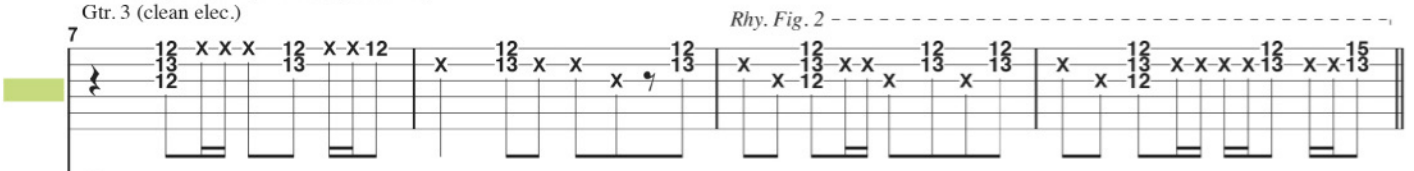
Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 1 twice (see bar 5)
Gtr. 3 (clean elec.)

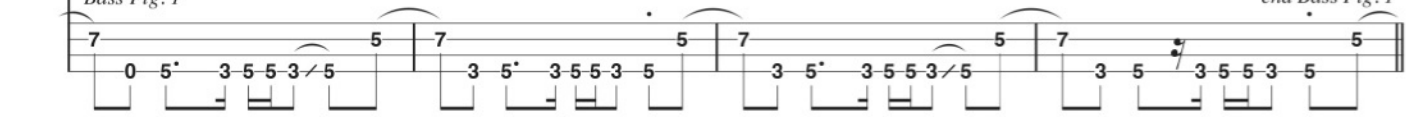
Rhy. Fig. 2



Bass

Bass Fig. 1

end Bass Fig. 1

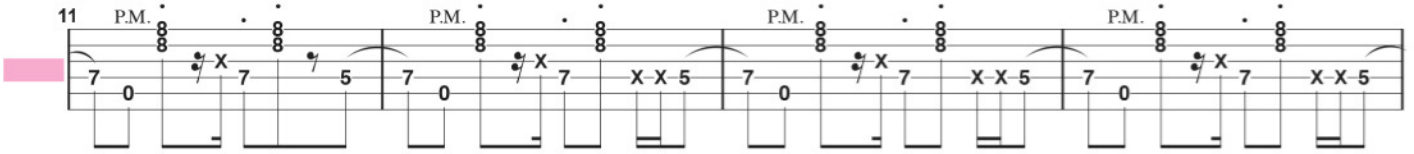


B **Verses** (0:18, 1:30)

1. Tired of being in the back seat I want my crown
2. I want the king size bed with the silk sheets

N.C. (Am7)

Gtr. 3 plays Rhy. Fig. 2 six times simile (see bar 9)
Gtr. 1 substitutes Rhy. Fill 1 on 2nd Verse (see bar 35)
Gtr. 1

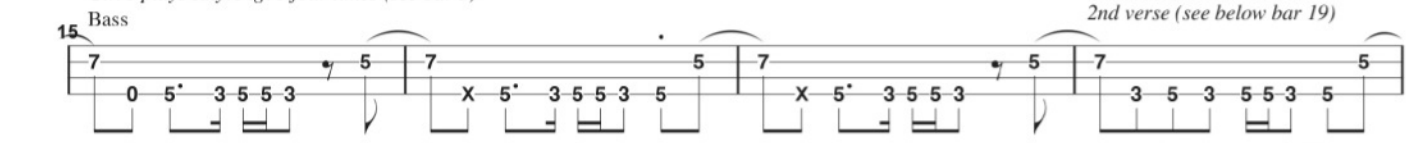


Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 (see bar 7)
Bass substitutes Bass Fill 1 on 2nd Verse (see bar 35)

Tired of just making ends meet y'all I want my crown
I want my face on a big billboard at the top of Beale Street

Gtr. 1 substitutes Rhy. Fill 2 on 2nd Verse (see below bar 3)
Gtr. 3 substitutes Fill 2 on 2nd verse (see below bar 19)

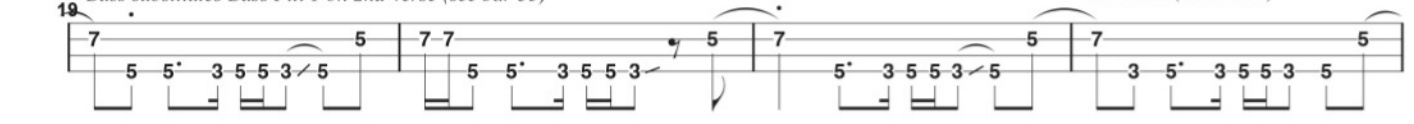
Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 1 four times (see bar 5)
Bass



Bass substitutes Bass Fill 2 on 2nd Verse (see below bar 5)

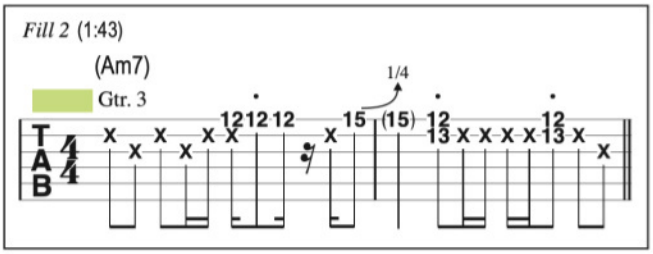
Tired of hearing 'bout Joe B. (Say what!) and how he tweaks that sound
All the haters out there hatin' that want to keep me down

Gtr. 1 substitutes Rhy. Fill 1 on 2nd Verse (see bar 35)
Bass substitutes Bass Fill 1 on 2nd Verse (see bar 35)

Gtr. 3 substitutes Fill 3 on 2nd verse (see below)

Fill 2 (1:43)

(Am7)

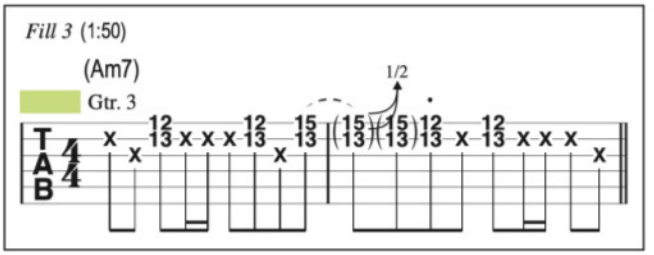
Gtr. 3

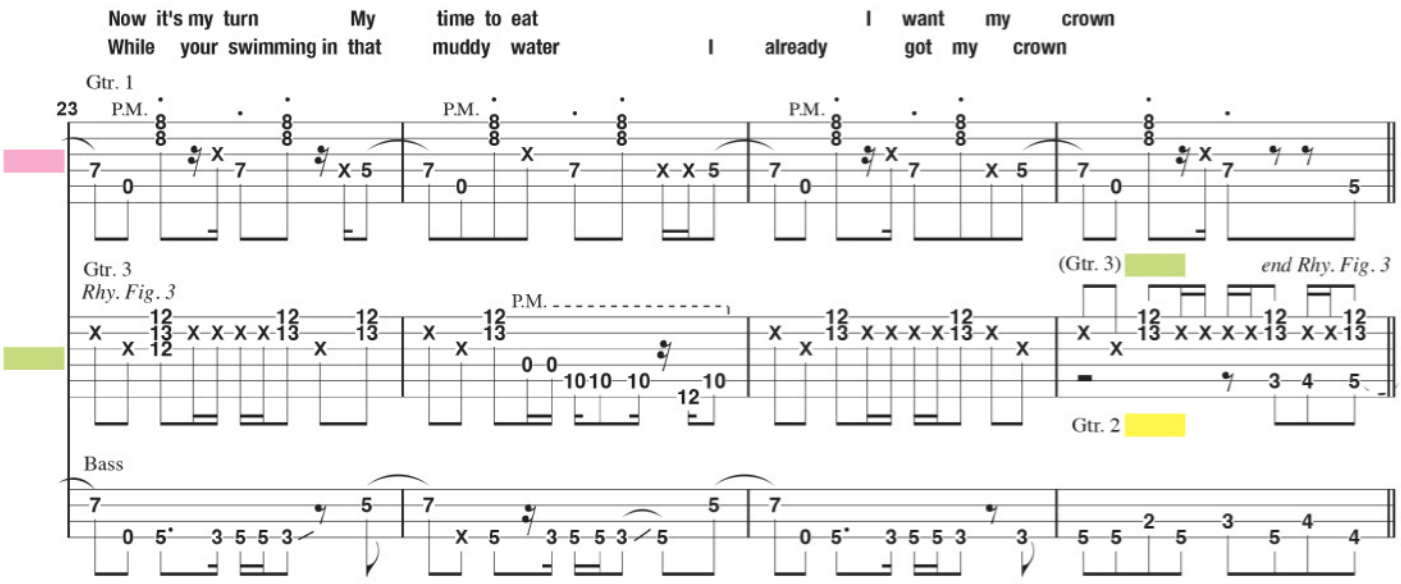


Fill 3 (1:50)

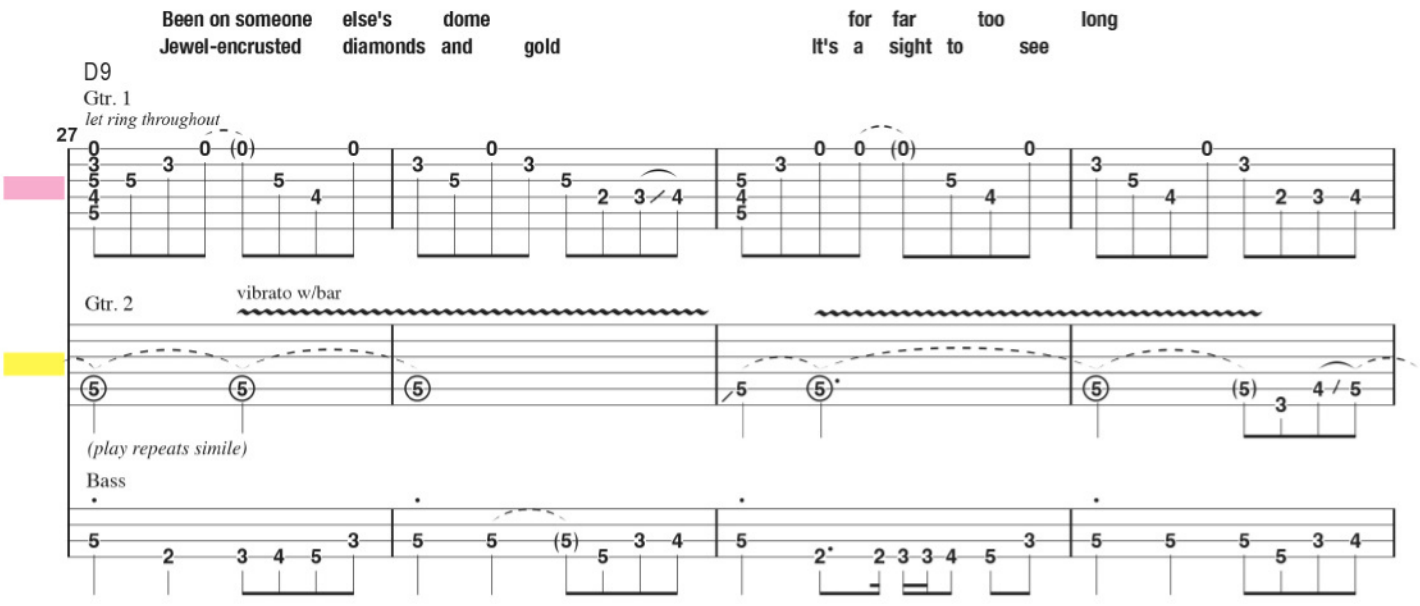
(Am7)

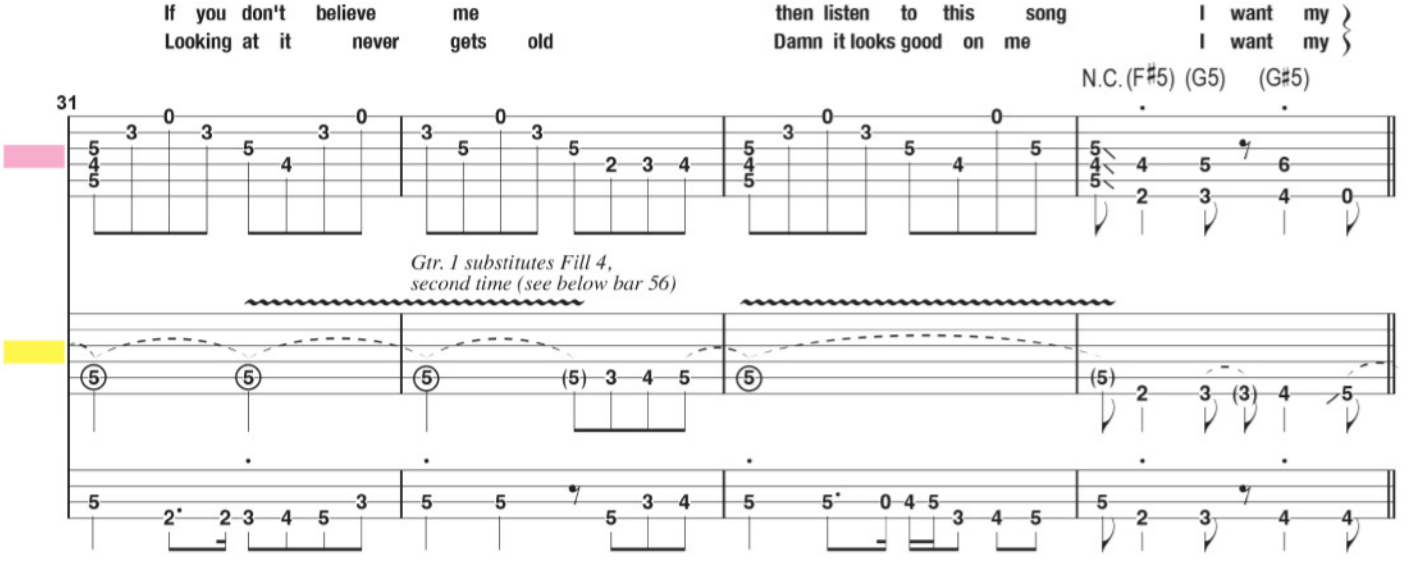
Gtr. 3





C **1st and 3rd Pre-choruses** (0:47, 1:59)





D **1st and 3rd Choruses** (1:01, 2:13)

crown I want my crown

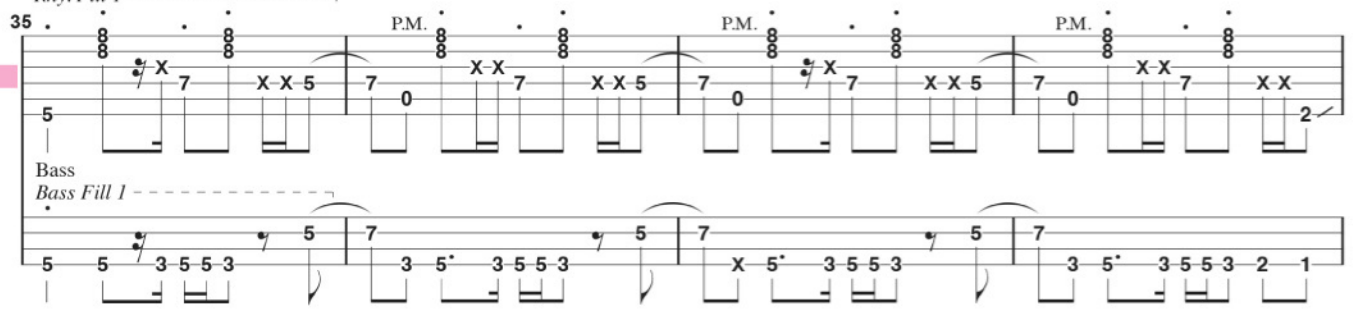
N.C. (Am7)

Gtr. 2 plays Fill 1 (see below bar 55)

Gtr. 3 plays Rhy. Fig. 3 (see bar 23)

Gtr. 1

Rhy. Fill 1



E **2nd, 4th, and 5th Pre-choruses** (1:09, 2:21, 3:47)

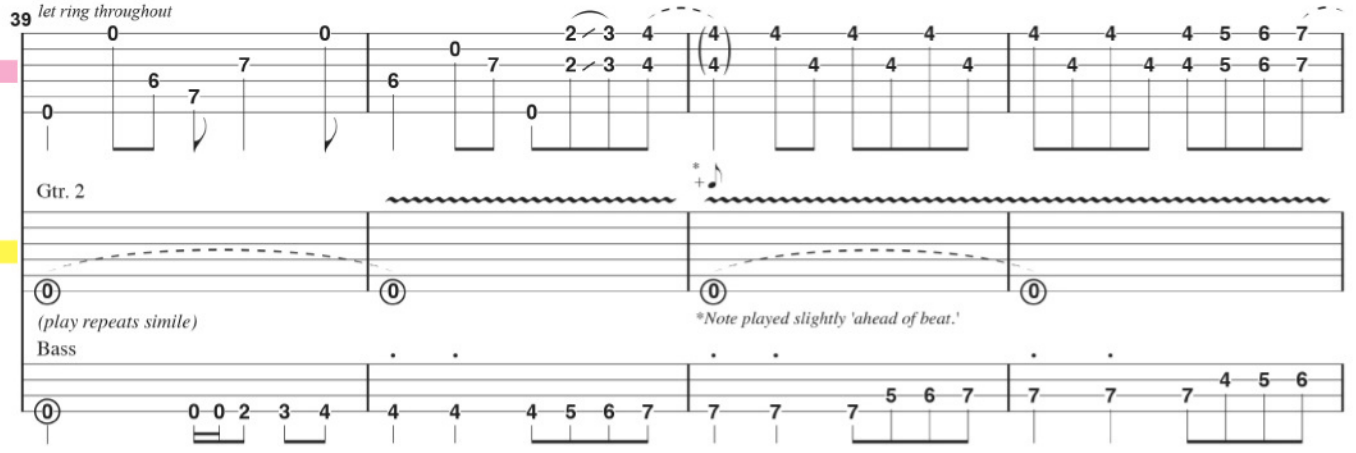
People tell me let it be Nobody bothered asking me

E7

Gtr. 4 plays Fill 5 third time (see below bar 55)

Gtr. 1

let ring throughout



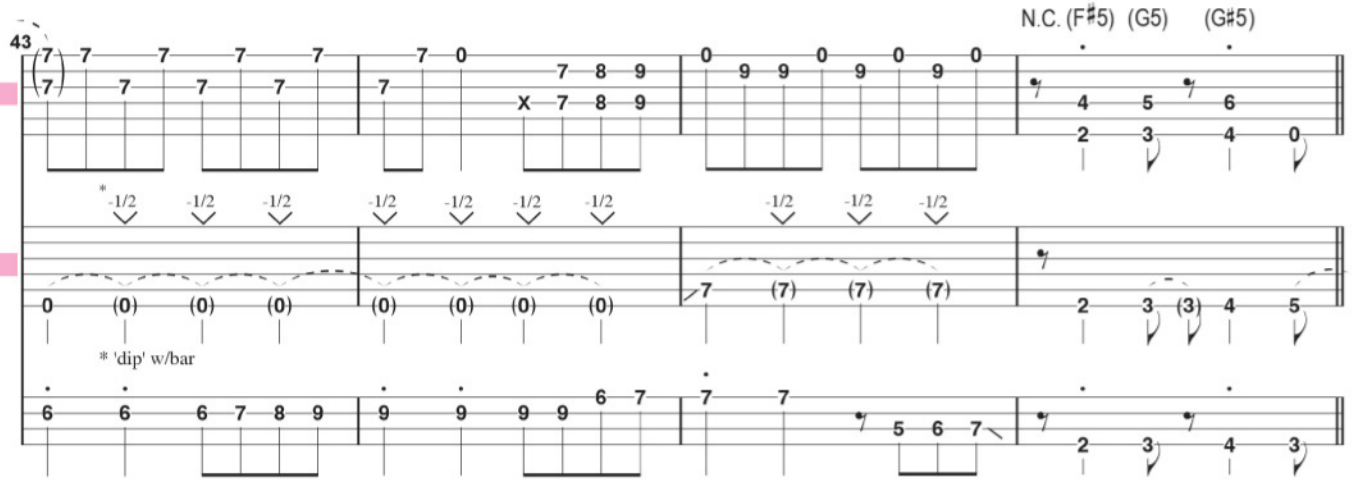
2nd time, skip ahead to G *Break (bar 51)*

3rd time, skip ahead to L *Outro (bar 91)*

For as long as I've been around It's my turn I want my

3rd time: I'm gonna take my

N.C. (F♯5) (G5) (G♯5)



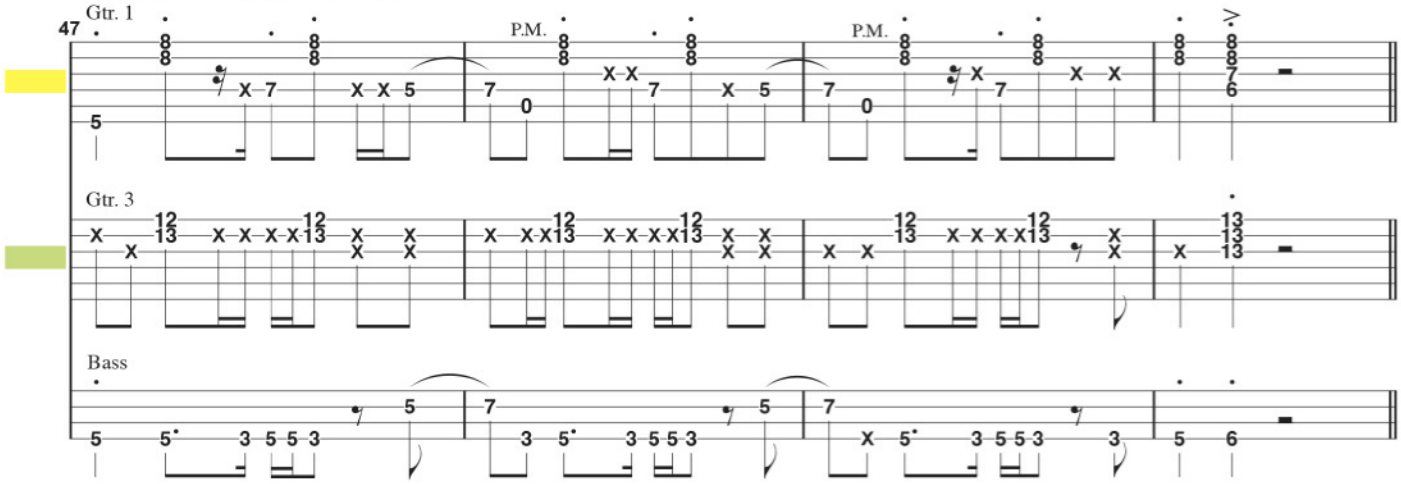
F **2nd Chorus** (1:23)

Go back to B *2nd Verse (bar 11)*

crown I want my crown Uh

N.C. (Am7) B♭13

Gtr. 2 plays Fill 1 (see below bar 55)

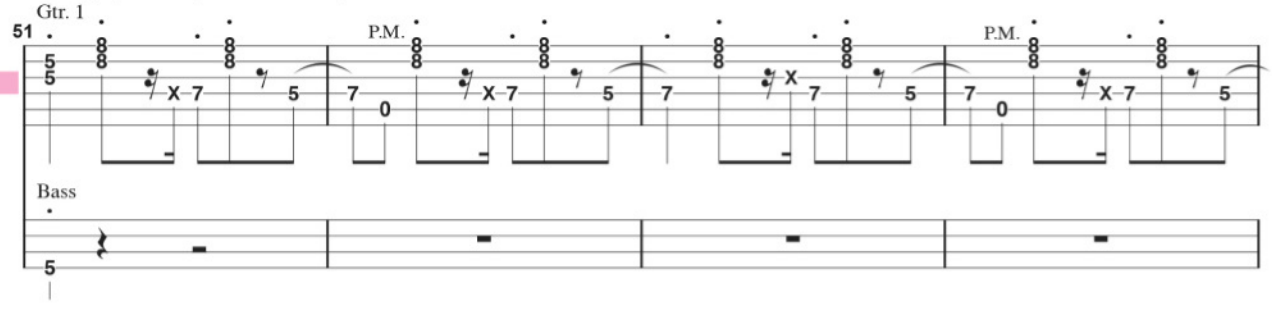


G **Break** (2:35)

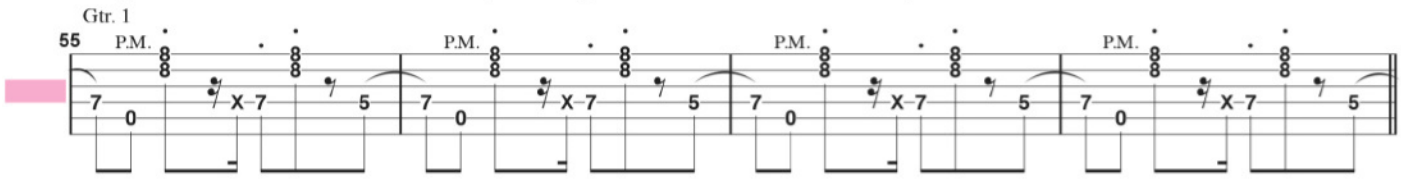
crown I want my crown *spoken:* Now for the people in the back I don't know if y'all can hear me

N.C. (Am7)

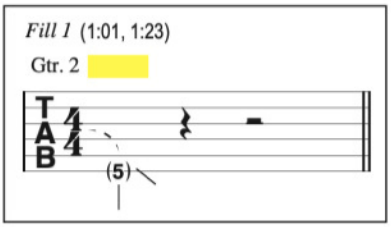
Gtr. 2 plays Fill 1 (see below bar 55)



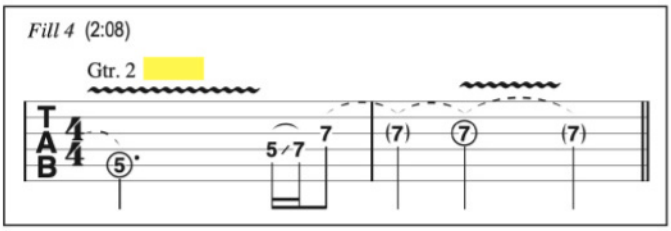
real good But it's time to step in the ring Me and you Let's hit it Joe Uh



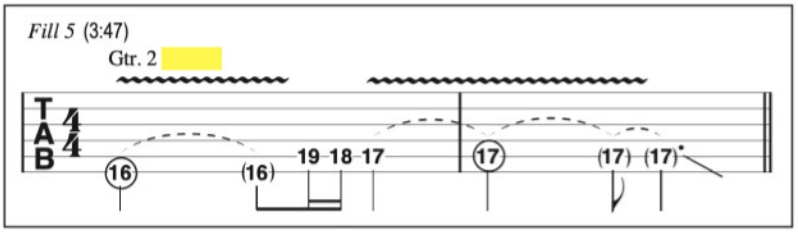
Fill 1 (1:01, 1:23)



Fill 4 (2:08)



Fill 5 (3:47)

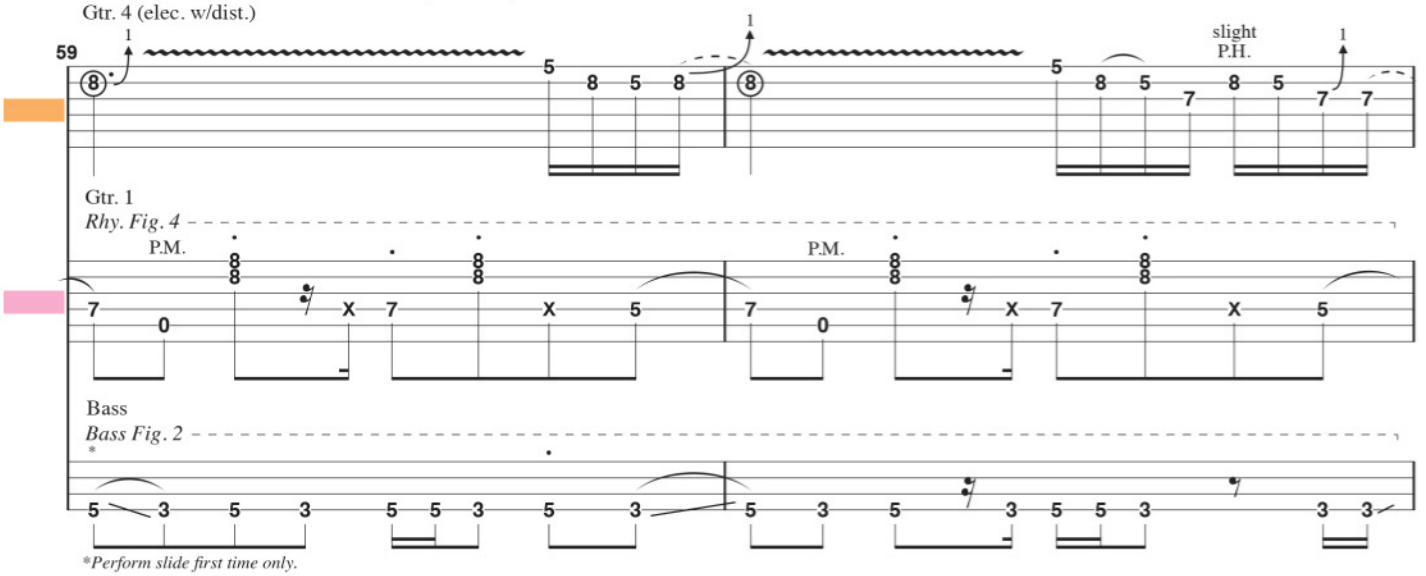


H **1st Guitar Solo (Joe Bonamassa)** (2:50)

N.C. (Am7)

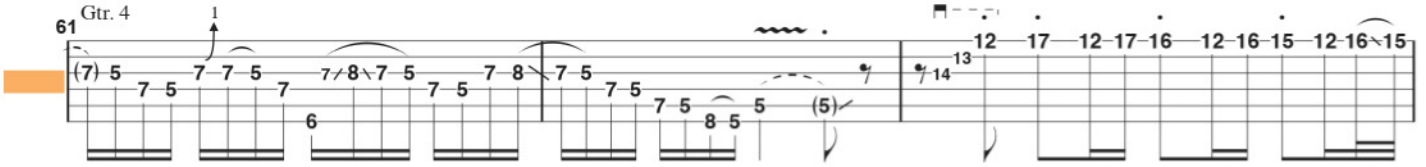
Gtr. 3 plays Rhy. Fig. 2 16 times simile (see bar 9)

Gtr. 4 (elec. w/dist.)

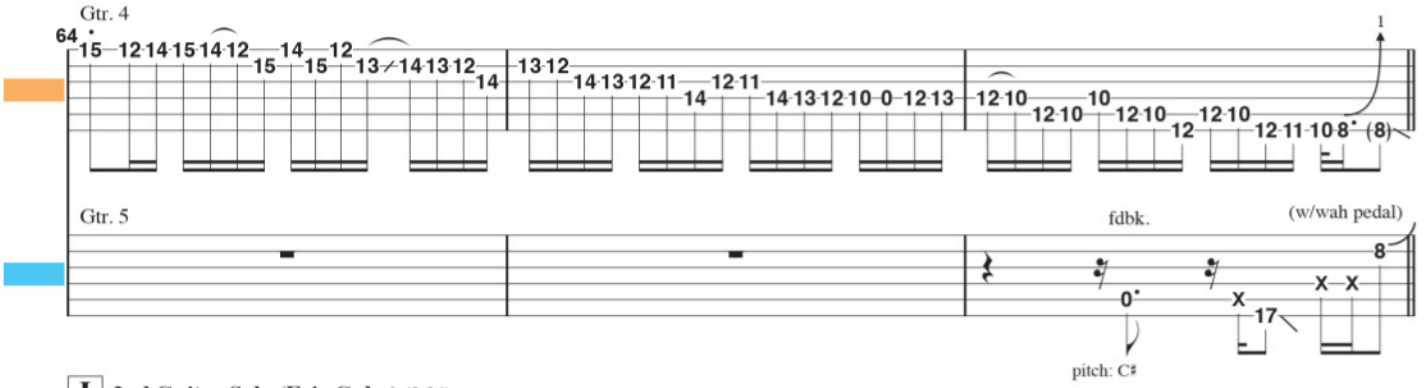


**Perform slide first time only.*

Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 4 15 times simile (see bar 59)

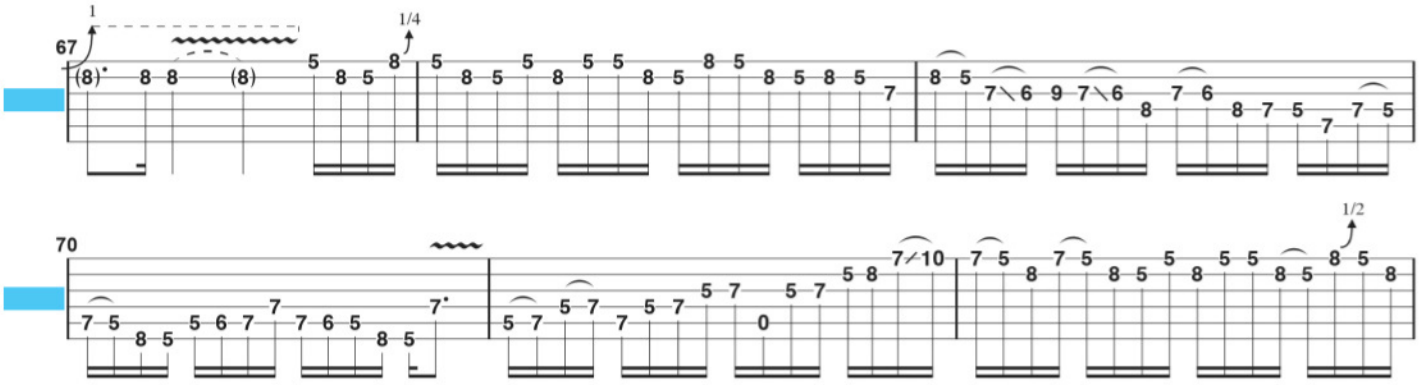


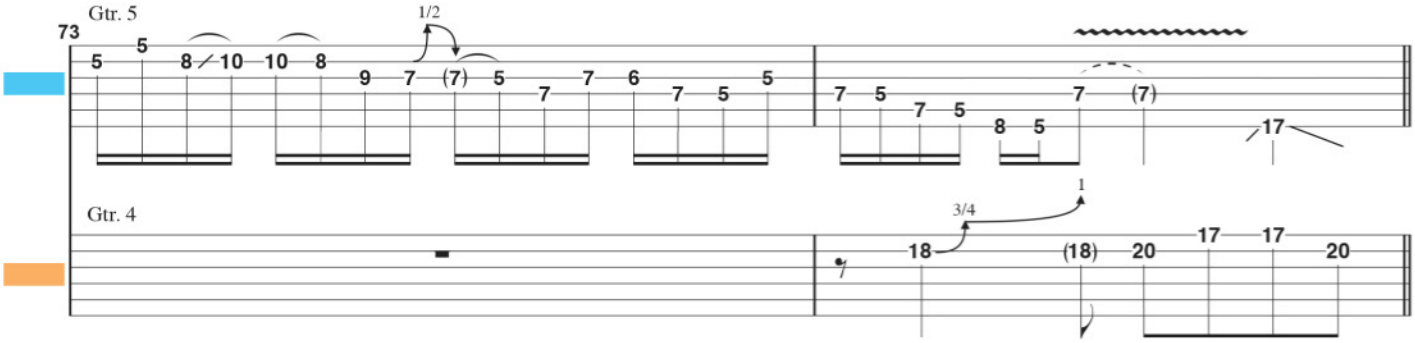
Bass plays Bass Fig. 2 15 times simile (see bar 59)



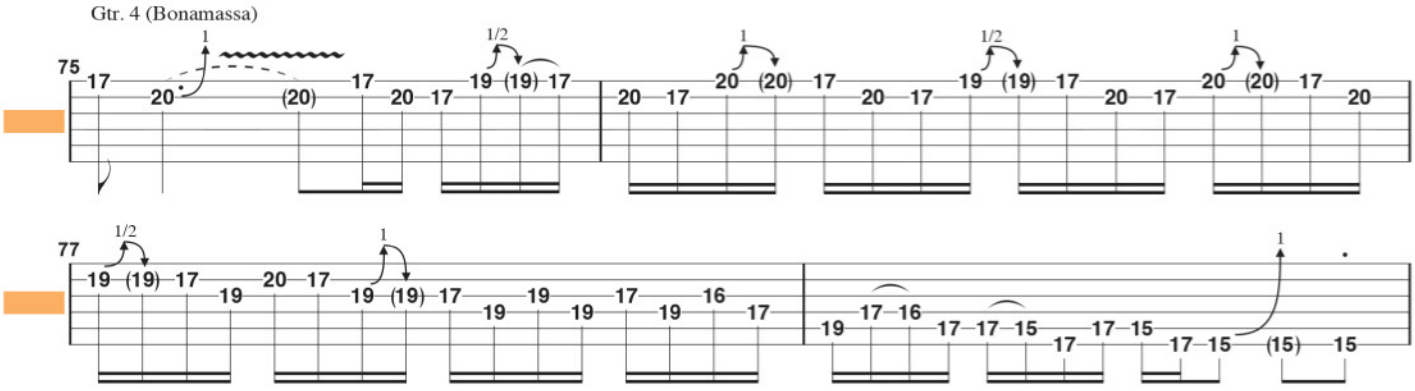
I **2nd Guitar Solo (Eric Gales)** (3:04)

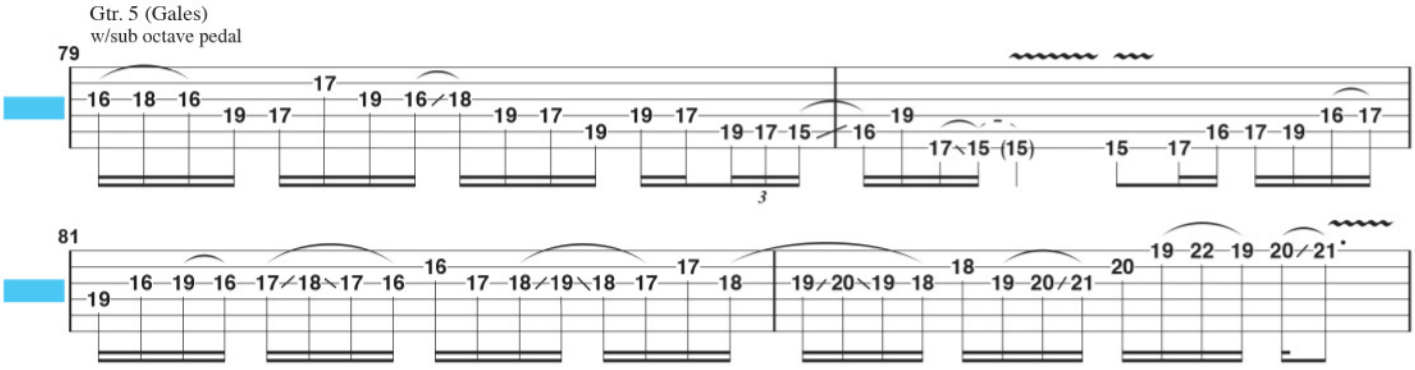
Gtr. 5 (elec. w/dist. and wah pedal)



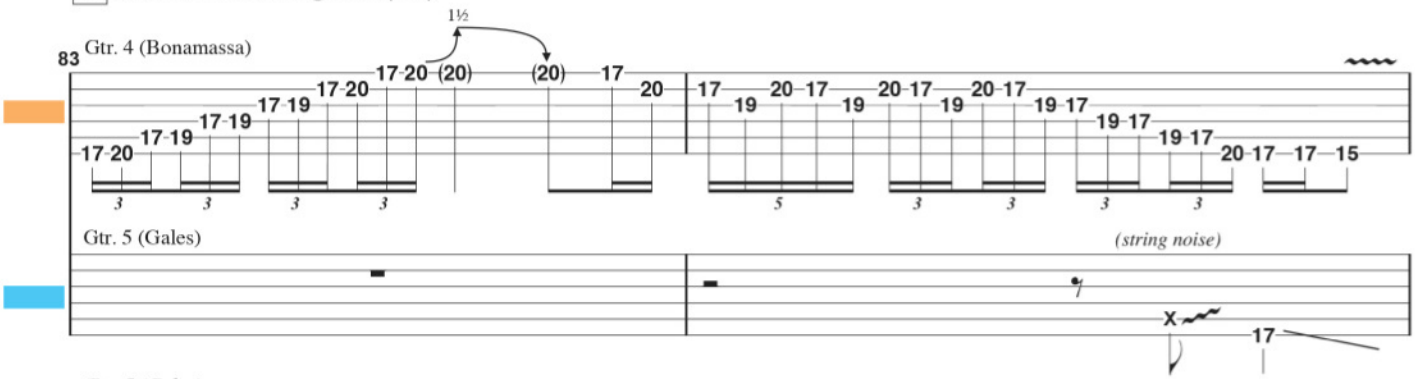


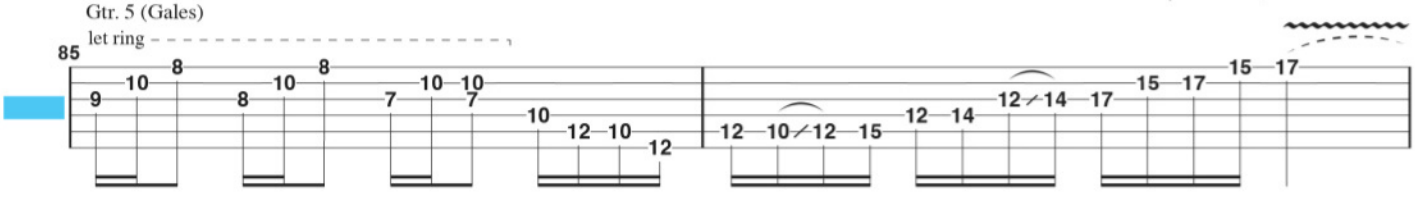
J Guitar Solo: Trading Fours (3:18)

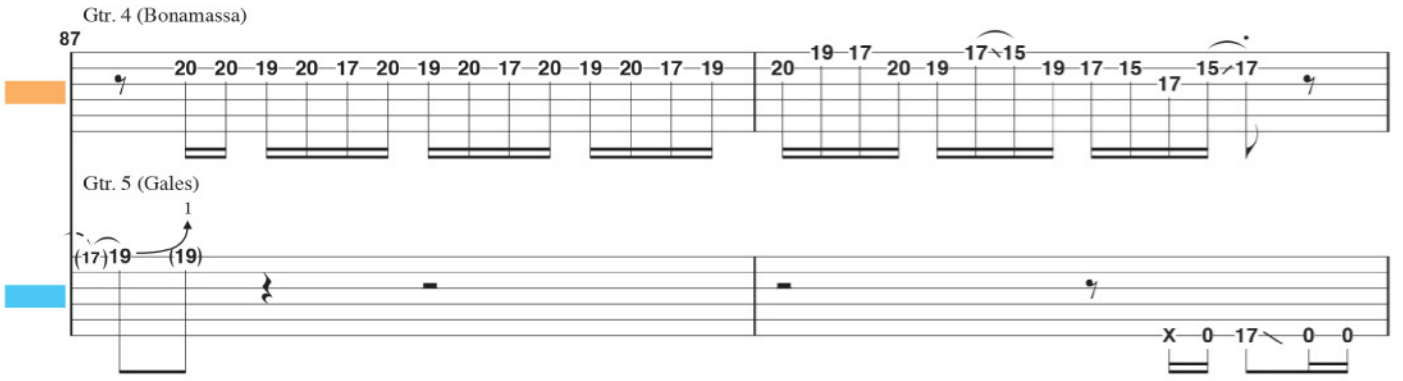




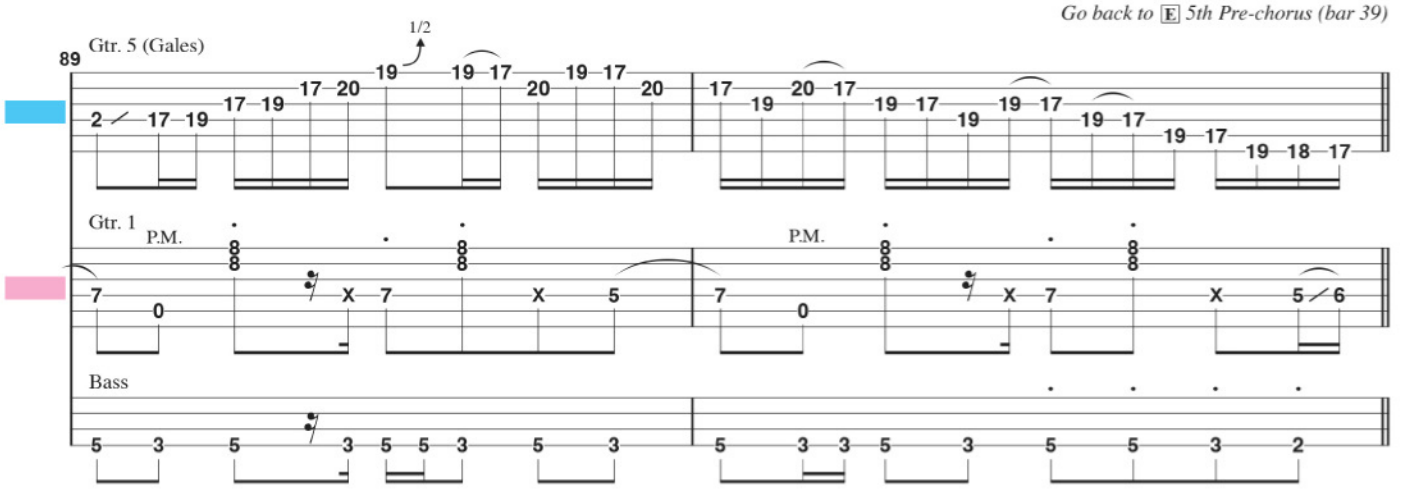
K Guitar Solo: Trading Twos (3:33)







Go back to E 5th Pre-chorus (bar 39)

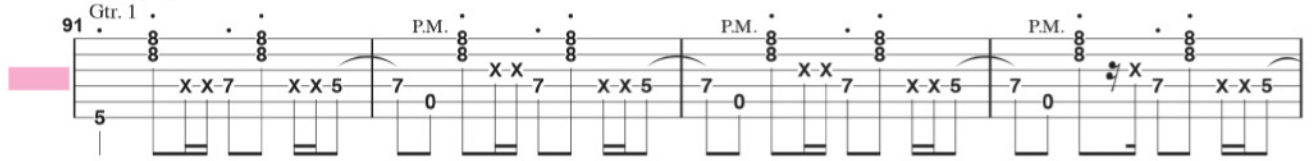


L Outro (4:02)

crown Take my crown (I want my
(Hey I want my crown I want my crown I want my crown)

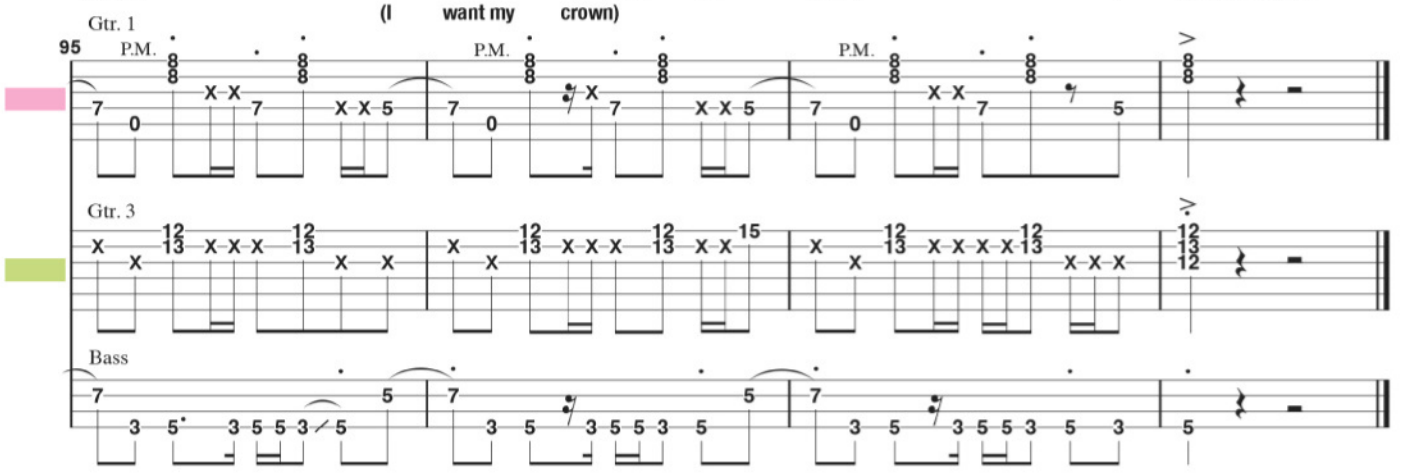
N.C. (Am7)

Gtr. 3 plays Rhy. Fig. 2 twice (see bar 9)
Gtr. 2 plays Fill 1 (see below bar 55)



Bass plays Bass Fill 1 (see bar 35) Bass cont. w/first three bars of Bass Fig. 1 (see bar 7)

(crown I want my crown I want my crown)
(I want my crown)



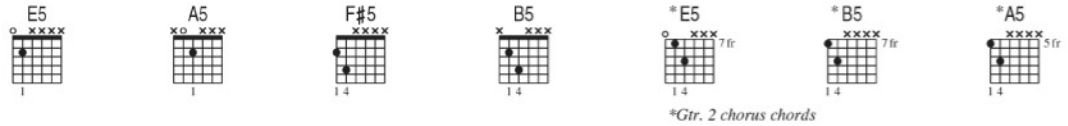
"JAILBREAK"

Thin Lizzy

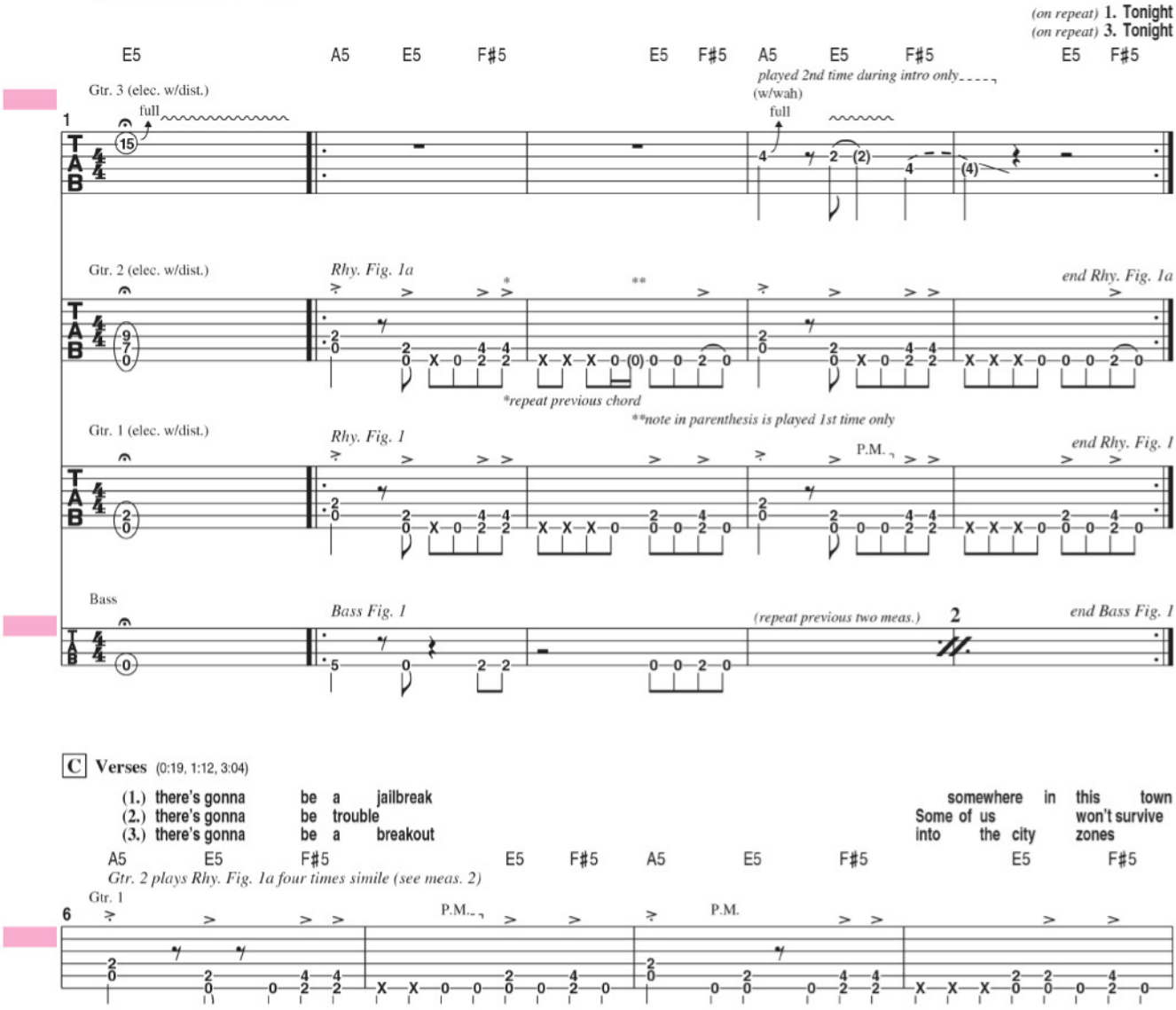
As heard on **JAILBREAK**

Words and Music by PHILIP PARRIS LYNOTT • *Transcribed by* JEFF PERRIN

Guitars are tuned down approximately one half step (low to high: E♭ A♭ D♭ G♭ B♭ E♭), slightly flat.
Bass tuning (low to high): E♭ A♭ D♭ G♭, slightly flat.
All notes and chords sound approximately one half step lower than written (key of F minor), slightly flat.



A Intro (0:00) **B** (0:06, 2:50)

Moderately Fast ♩ = 144

C Verses (0:19, 1:12, 3:04)

(1.) there's gonna be a jailbreak
(2.) there's gonna be trouble
(3.) there's gonna be a breakout

Some of us into the city somewhere in this town won't survive zones

"JAILBREAK"
WORDS AND MUSIC BY PHILIP PARRIS LYNOTT.
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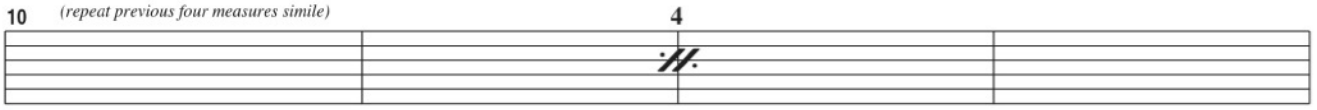
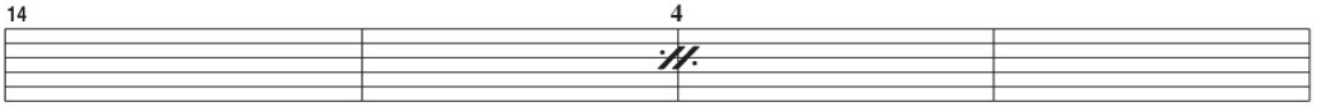
See me and the boys we don't like it
See the boys and me mean business
Don't you dare to try and stop us

so we're gettin' up and goin' down
Bustin' out dead or alive
No one could for long

10 *(repeat previous four measures simile)*

I can hear the hound dogs on my trail
Hidin' low lookin' right to left
Searchlight on my trail

If you see us comin' I think it's best
All hell breaks loose alarm and sirens wail
Tonight's the night all systems fail

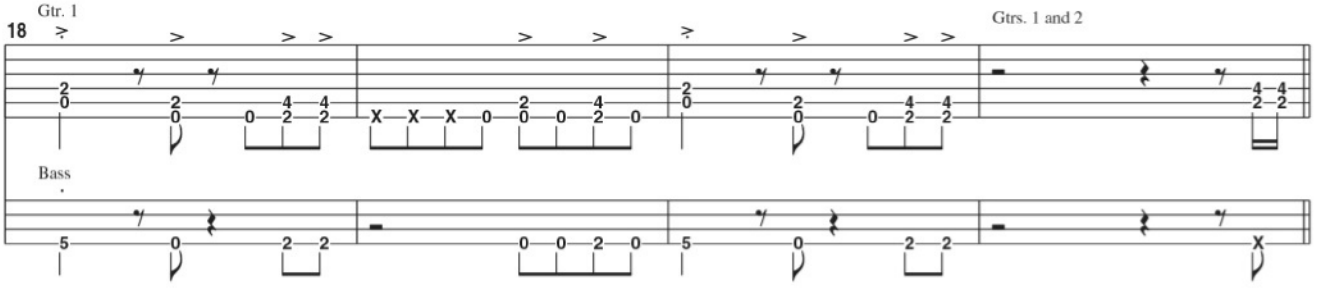
14

(2nd time) skip ahead to F 2nd Chorus
(3rd time) skip ahead to F 3rd Chorus

to move away Do you hear what I say from under my breath
Like a game if you lose Go to jail Tonight
Hey you good lookin' female Come here

A5 E5 F♯5 E5 F♯5 A5 E5 F♯5 B5

Gtr. 1

18



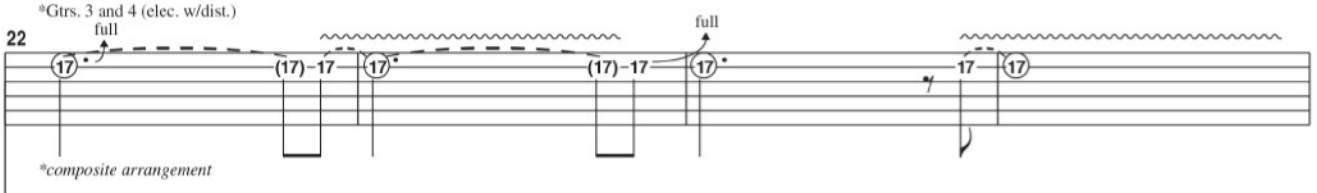
D 1st Chorus (0:45)

there's gonna be a jailbreak somewhere in the town tonight

B5 E5 B5 E5 B5

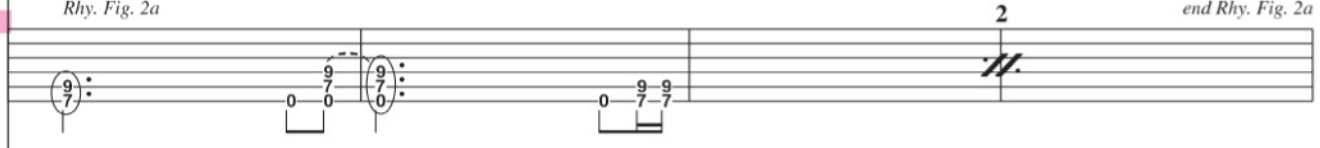
*Gtrs. 3 and 4 (elec. w/dist.)

22 full full

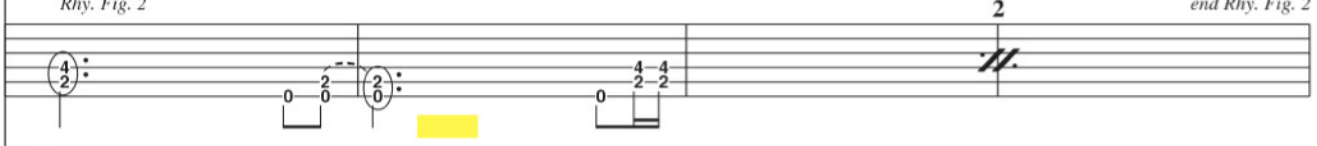


**composite arrangement*

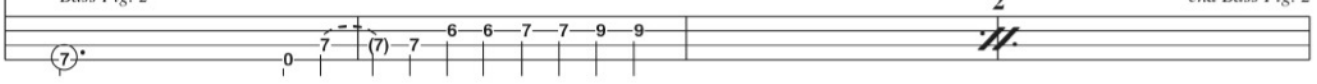
Gtr. 2 (w/slow phase shifter)
Rhy. Fig. 2a

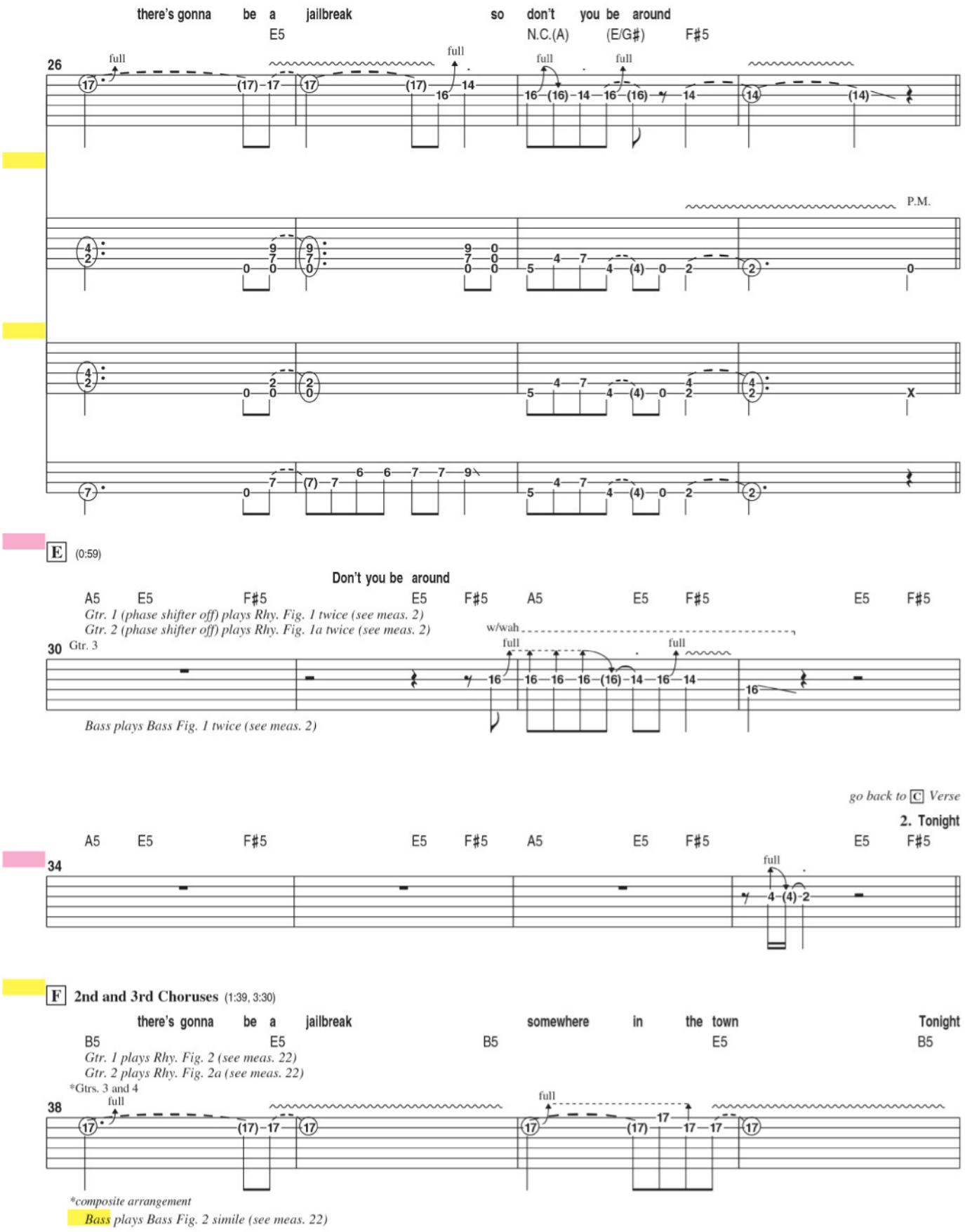


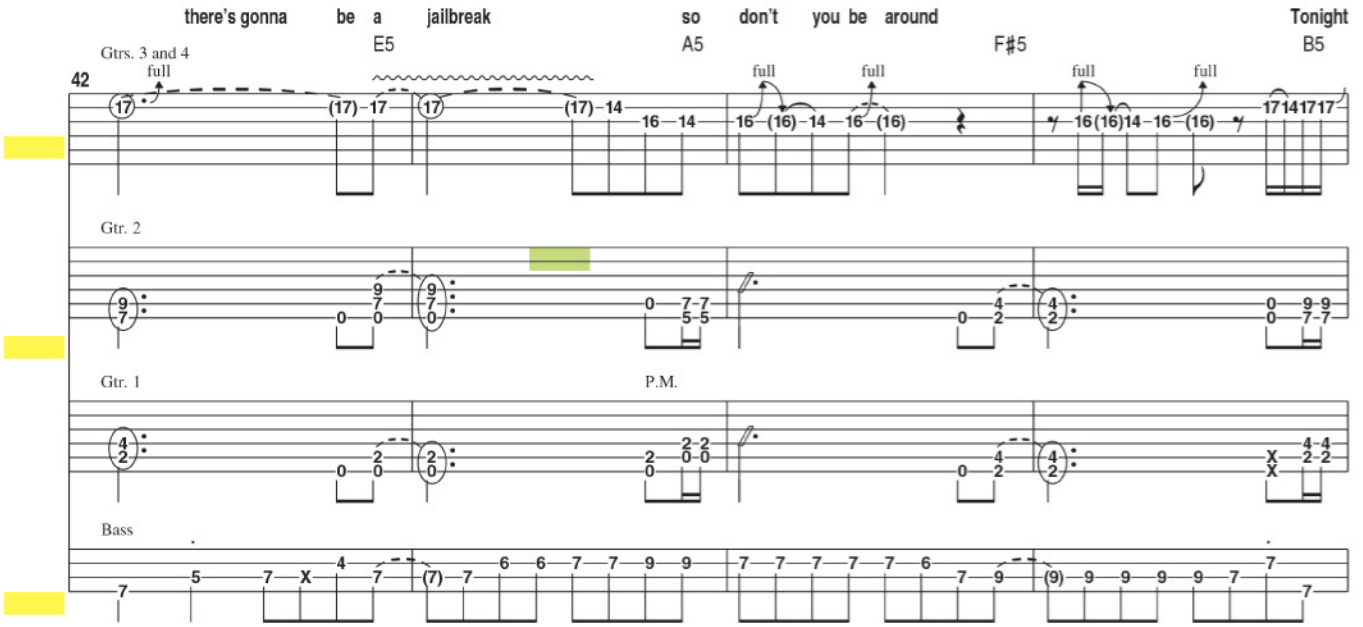
Gtr. 1 (w/slow phase shifter)
Rhy. Fig. 2



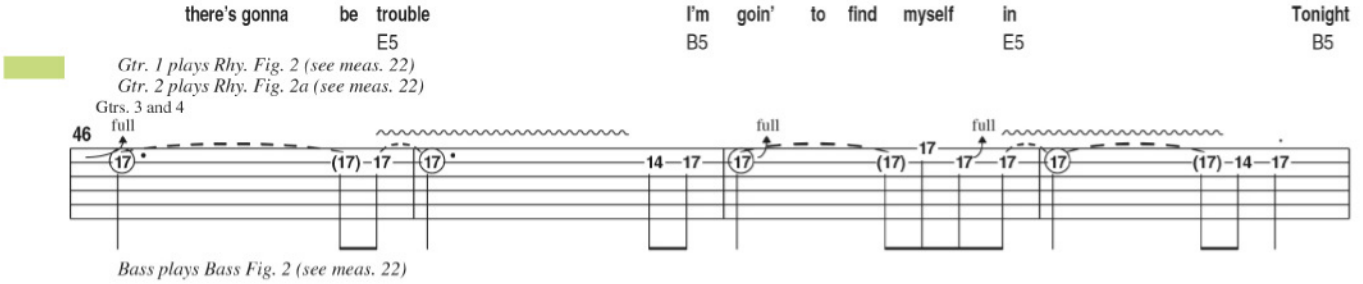
Bass
Bass Fig. 2

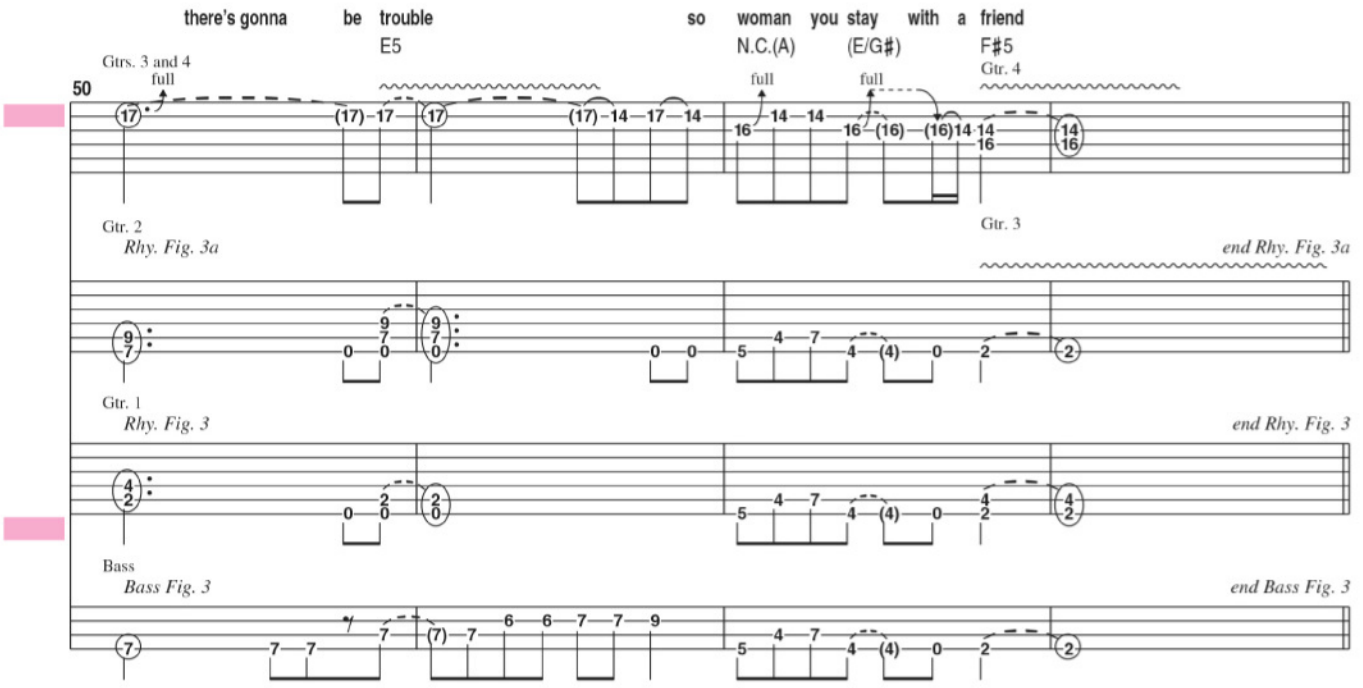


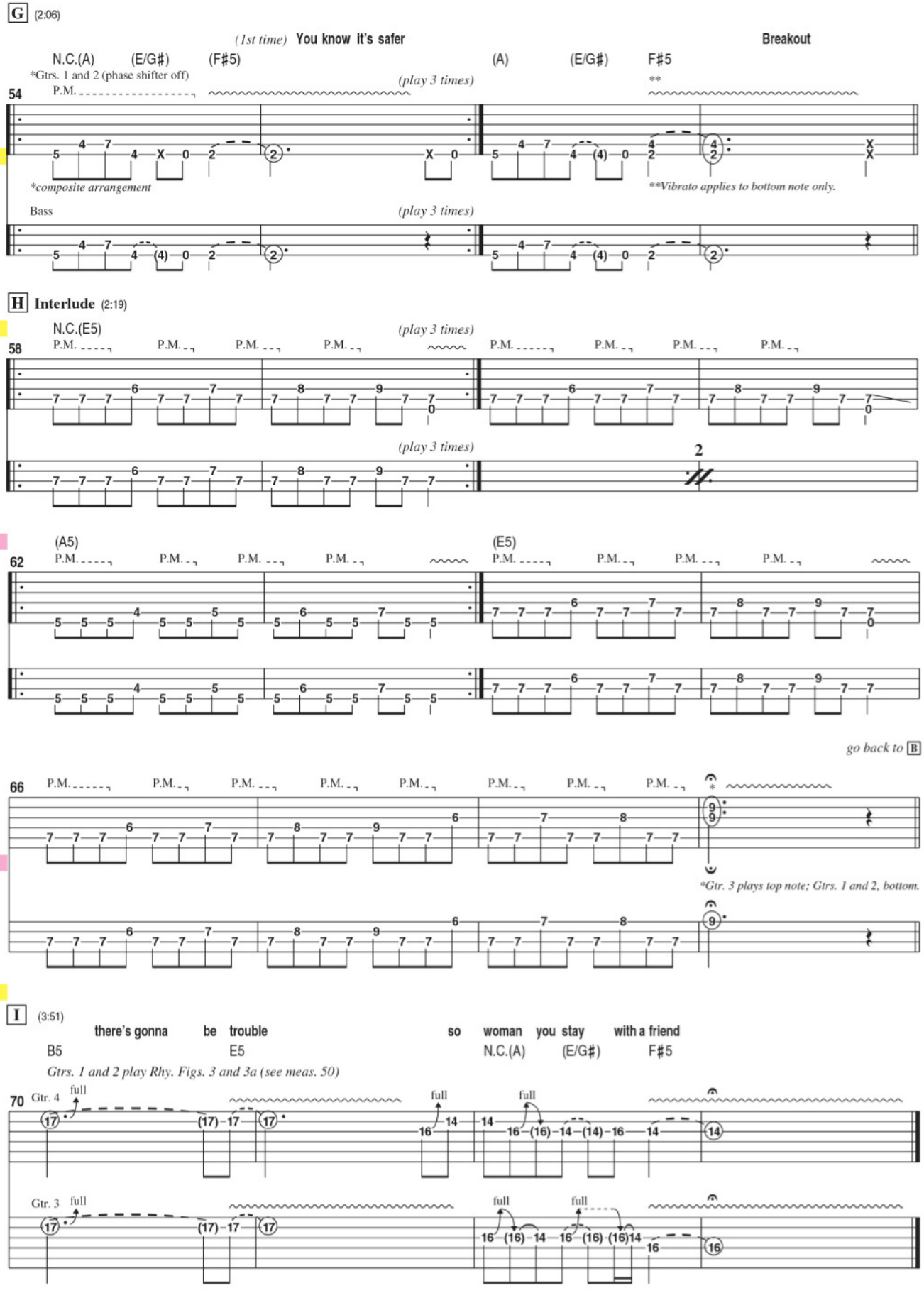

there's gonna be a jailbreak so don't you be around
E5 N.C.(A) (E/G♯) F♯5
26
full
P.M.
E (0:59)
Don't you be around
A5 E5 F♯5 E5 F♯5 A5 E5 F♯5 E5 F♯5
Gtr. 1 (phase shifter off) plays Rhy. Fig. 1 twice (see meas. 2)
Gtr. 2 (phase shifter off) plays Rhy. Fig. 1a twice (see meas. 2)
w/wah
30 Gtr. 3
Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 twice (see meas. 2)
go back to C Verse
2. Tonight
A5 E5 F♯5 E5 F♯5 A5 E5 F♯5 E5 F♯5
34
F 2nd and 3rd Choruses (1:39, 3:30)
there's gonna be a jailbreak somewhere in the town Tonight
B5 E5 B5 E5 B5
Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 2 (see meas. 22)
Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 2a (see meas. 22)
*Gtrs. 3 and 4
38
*composite arrangement
Bass plays Bass Fig. 2 simile (see meas. 22)



(2nd time) skip ahead to I






G (2:06)
(1st time) You know it's safer
Breakout
N.C.(A) (E/G♯) (F♯5) (A) (E/G♯) F♯5
*Gtrs. 1 and 2 (phase shifter off)
(play 3 times)
54
P.M.
**
*composite arrangement
**Vibrato applies to bottom note only.
Bass
(play 3 times)
H Interlude (2:19)
N.C.(E5)
(play 3 times)
58
P.M.
(play 3 times)
2
(A5)
(E5)
62
P.M.
go back to B
66
P.M.
*Gtr. 3 plays top note; Gtrs. 1 and 2, bottom.
I (3:51)
there's gonna be trouble so woman you stay with a friend
B5 E5 N.C.(A) (E/G♯) F♯5
Gtrs. 1 and 2 play Rhy. Figs. 3 and 3a (see meas. 50)
70
Gtr. 4
full
Gtr. 3
full

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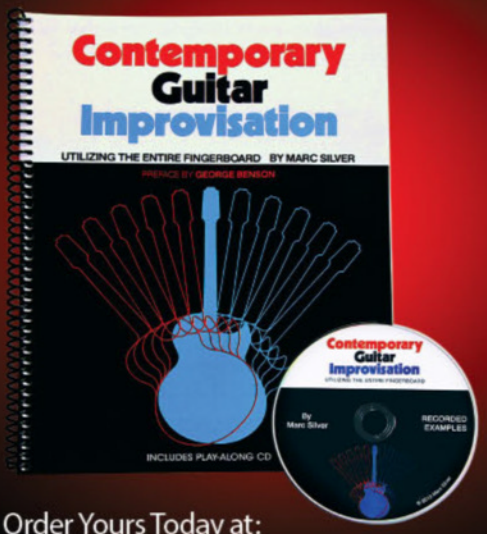

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BY CHRIS GILL

GRETSCH 6120 CHET ATKINS/NASHVILLE

CATEGORY: HOLLOWBODY ELECTRIC GUITAR

THE GIBSON LES Paul and Fender Esquire/Telecaster and Stratocaster solidbodies and the Gibson ES-335 semihollow electric rightfully rank as some of the most iconic guitars of the early days of rock 'n' roll. But another often overlooked guitar that deserves a spot right next to them is the Gretsch 6120. Originally developed by Gretsch as a signature model for Chet Atkins in 1954 (alongside the chambered "solid" body 6121 Chet Atkins signature "roundup" model), the G6120 was more warmly embraced by rockabilly and rock 'n' roll guitarists than the country and western players Gretsch initially targeted.

Atkins himself wasn't too thrilled with the 6120's western-inspired decorations and bright orange finish, and he played the model for only a brief period before Gretsch developed his favored Country Gentleman guitar. However, rockers loved the attention-getting orange glow, which remained on the model even after the western attributes disappeared. Eddie Cochran was the most notable early rock 'n' roller to play a 6120, damaging the minds of countless impressionable youths when he performed "Twenty Flight Rock" in the 1956 film *The Girl Can't Help It*. Duane Eddy's 6120 later defined the sound known as "twang" on several hit instrumentals during the late Fifties.

The 6120 originally was equipped with a pair of DeArmond single-coil pickups, but in late 1957 Gretsch swapped the pickups for a pair of its new Filter'Tron humbuckers. For most 6120 aficionados, the 1958-61 single-cutaway model is the ultimate version of the 6120 with its Filter'Tron humbuckers, ebony fretboard with Neoclassic/Thumbprint inlays, bar-style bridge, master/neck/bridge pickup volume knobs, three-way pickup selector switch and rarely used master tone switch.

Pete Townshend played a 1959 6120 (given to him by Joe Walsh) to record tracks on *Who's Next* and *Quadrophenia*

Eric Clapton [*left*] and Pete Townshend at London's Rainbow Theatre, January 13, 1973; Townshend is playing his 1959 Gretsch 6120

[*right*] Stray Cats' self-titled 1981 debut album is jam-packed with 6120 goodness

The 6120 continued to make rock history during the Sixties in the hands of players like Neil Young and Steve Miller. The mid-Sixties double-cutaway 6120 model experienced very brief but important encounters with Eric Clapton (Yardbirds) and John Lennon ("Paperback Writer" sessions). In the Seventies Randy Bachman used his 6120 to write and record "American Woman" with the Guess Who as well as several BTO hits like "Takin' Care of Business," and Pete Townshend played a 1959 6120 given to him by Joe Walsh to record guitar tracks on the Who's legendary *Who's Next* and *Quadrophenia* albums.

The 6120 had become a forgotten relic relegated to dusty pawn shops during the late Seventies, but when Brian Setzer hit the scene with the Stray Cats in the early Eighties, the model became a modern rockabilly icon, later adopted by players like the Cramps' Poison Ivy, Reverend Horton Heat and Chris Cheney of the Living End. Setzer solely inspired the 6120's resurrection in 1989, shortly after Fred Gretsch revived his family's namesake company, and it could be argued that both Setzer and the 6120 saved Gretsch from oblivion.

Today Gretsch offers a wide variety of 6120 models, including Chet Atkins and Brian Setzer signature models in addition to standard Nashville models. There's even a signature model for Atkins acolyte Steve Wariner, which brings the 6120 full circle back to its country music roots. Thanks to the model's incredible versatility that encompasses everything from raunchy rhythms to lush jazzy leads, today you're as likely to see a 6120 in the hands of hard rock and punk players as you are to hear one churning out rockabilly, hillbilly jazz or a twangy instrumental.

SUGGESTED RIGS

A Filter'Tron-equipped Gretsch 6120 and a Fender Bassman – either a late-Fifties 4x10 tweed model as used by Eddie Cochran or an early Sixties piggyback head/2x12 cabinet rig that's Brian Setzer's preferred setup – is a match made in heaven. Add in some tape-style or analog slapback echo (90-100ms) and you're ready to rock. Or go for the throat and bang out some heavier, raunchier tones with a plexi-style Marshall; just watch out for feedback.

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BOSS 50TH ANNIVERSARY

HOW ONE INNOVATIVE COMPANY CHANGED THE SOUNDSCAPE OF MODERN MUSIC IN FIVE DECADES

Music is about shared experiences. The feeling of connection you get when someone loves the same music as you do is one we all know. But some gear becomes so universal, so widely adopted and trusted by musicians, that it, too, becomes part of our shared musical experience. The effects pedals made by BOSS over the past 50 years can fairly lay claim to this rare accolade.

Few items of gear are as instantly recognizable as a DS-1, for example, and it's no surprise because millions have been sold over the years. The genius of BOSS is that its products feel like they belong to everyone – from session pros to metallers, to kids thrashing out their first three-chord punk in the garage. BOSS pedals are some of the most widely imitated and modded effects in the world, and they also appear on more hit records than you could easily list. Wherever you look in music, you'll see and hear BOSS gear in action – from Loop Stations to overdrives, from synths to tech-enabled amplifiers.

That's why, as the company celebrates 50 historic years in production, we've put together this beautiful collector's edition guide to the heritage, sounds and innovative tech that BOSS has rocked the world with over the past five decades – continuing to surprise and inspire musicians, but always reliable and ready for any stage. Join us in the following pages as we chart the milestones and iconic tones of a company that at once feels like the biggest name in effects and part of the family. Enjoy the issue.

Jamie Dickson **Editor-in-chief, *Guitarist***

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A TRADITION OF INVENTION

BOSS still lives by its famous motto – 'We design the future' – but don't overlook the milestones that led the Japanese firm to the cutting edge of the modern music scene

Words
Henry Yates
Photography
Olly Curtis

Any show, any stage, any pedalboard, any backline – for more than half a century, BOSS has been the constant strand of DNA in a music scene endlessly shedding its skin. Of course, it is the visionary Japanese company's nature to look to the future, to the products still to be invented, the technologies as yet untapped and the generations of musicians waiting to make their mark. But as outgoing president Yoshihiro Ikegami reminds us, it is only by reflecting on the road already traveled that this still-questing company can forge ahead.

"Our 50-year history is a testament to our commitment to quality and innovation," says Ikegami of a journey whose headline statistics include 18 million total units sold and the release of 140 compact pedal models, not to mention the status of the world's second-biggest amp builder since launching the Katana in 2016. "It's a legacy we're incredibly proud of. While we strive for breakthroughs, we must also cherish our history. Our history is the foundation upon which we build our future. It's crucial to balance innovation with the wisdom and experience that 50 years have provided us."

> "IT'S A LEGACY WE'RE INCREDIBLY PROUD OF. WHILE WE STRIVE FOR BREAKTHROUGHS, WE MUST ALSO CHERISH OUR HISTORY" *Yoshihiro Ikegami*

1. Overdrive pedals have become commonplace but it was BOSS that made them a mainstream, affordable product with the 1977 debut of the OD-1

Rewind to the 1960s and the guitar effects scene was the Wild West. If you knew which doors to knock on, and were famous enough to jump the waiting list, then maverick-genius artisans like Roger Mayer could be commissioned to build a one-off pedal in their London, U.K. workshops. But there was no coherent effects sector, no industry standard, no single manufacturer giving players what they needed to lead the charge for the gathering rock 'n' roll revolution.

In the U.S.A., an exasperated Gibson had discontinued its own fuzzbox, while in Japan, Roland had dipped a toe into the effects market with early units like the AG-5 Funny Cat and AF-100 BeeBaa, but found they were an acquired taste (with the company's founder and chairman Ikutaro Kakehashi memorably explaining that it was "like trying to persuade a person who has never eaten octopus to try a slice").

The arrival of BOSS in 1973 changed everything. In those first years, the newcomer existed hand-in-glove with parent company Roland – itself only founded by Kakehashi a year earlier, as the successor to Ace Tone – even to the point of sharing engineers. But while BOSS would rapidly become its own entity, the two firms' early tag-team creativity would prove key to BOSS's seminal pedal release of 1976, with the CE-1 Chorus Ensemble pedal underpinned by virtually identical circuitry to Roland's iconic JC-120 Jazz Chorus amp.

As Kakehashi told *The BOSS Book*, it was only once the CE-1 had appeared in a photo of jazz great Herbie Hancock that sales ignited. "America is such a big place, it's hard to find a spark to light the fire. But then, once the fire has been caught, it leads to scorching sales. In just a month, we unloaded stocks of the CE-1 that we'd been stuck with for 18 months."

Even if the company had never made another pedal, the CE-1 would have earned BOSS its place in the gear chronicles. The revelation came in 1977, as the simultaneous launch of its first three compact pedals – in the form of the OD-1 Over Drive, PH-1 Phaser and SP-1 Spectrum – announced the Japanese company's intentions to systematically perfect every effect on the market (and invent plenty more besides).

BOSS TIMELINE:
A 50-Year Legacy

1972
Roland Corporation founded in Osaka, Japan

1973
BOSS precursor, MEG Electronics, founded in Osaka

1976
CE-1 Chorus Ensemble: first BOSS-branded stompbox and world's first chorus pedal

The seminal BOSS CE-1 Chorus Ensemble pedal featured the same circuitry used in Roland's also groundbreaking JC-120 amplifier

"BEFORE BOSS, THERE JUST WASN'T A WIDE ENOUGH SELECTION… THEY KICKED IT INTO HIGH GEAR, ECLIPSED EVERYTHING ELSE" *Robert Keeley*

"I think we needed the creativity and the manufacturing style of the Japanese to really get effects pedals into the modern world," reflects Robert Keeley, the highly respected founder of Keeley Electronics. "Before BOSS, there just wasn't a wide enough selection and, in my opinion, it wasn't built as well as BOSS could do it. It took a team of engineers to kinda line out all the effects that were possible. Y'know, different types of drives, phasers, flangers, chorus, echo – BOSS just kinda outlined how effects should be organized and the parameters for each of the sounds. They really kicked it into high gear, eclipsed everything else that was going on. And all those things, they put together in a really great package, obviously."

Solid Foundations

For BOSS, operation was never an afterthought. Aside from the color-coding that identified each effect class, those first compacts established BOSS's enduring calling card of heavy-duty uniformity. Unlike temperamental rival pedals, these units were built on the foundation of an aluminum die-cast chassis, with electronic FET switches that prevented the on/off switching noise and frequent failures of mechanical contacts. For added practicality, the BOSS units featured non-slip rubber bases and footswitch pads and the unprecedented choice between battery or AC power.

"One thing that can't be overlooked is that BOSS pedals are built like a tank, which meant the pros would tour with them," says Daniel Steinhardt of *That Pedal Show*. "I could see the BOSS pedals at the feet of my guitar heroes, the very same ones I could buy from my local music shop."

As Ikegami points out, those practical features were not the result of any single visionary. "BOSS's strength lies in teamwork. In the early days, our team worked relentlessly to develop products like our iconic compact pedal. The dedication and passion that went into these early products have become the heart of our product creation process. They put a great deal of thought into creating the best shape, size and everything else. While we've made minor improvements over the years, the essence remains the same. Even in the early days, it was a collective effort to shape the company's future."

2. Bold, diverse colors made BOSS pedals instantly recognizable – and yet the standardized utility and toughness of their core design was the real key to their success

> "I COULD SEE THE BOSS PEDALS AT THE FEET OF MY GUITAR HEROES, THE SAME ONES I COULD BUY FROM MY LOCAL MUSIC SHOP" *Daniel Steinhardt*

From the vantage point of 2023, that first wave of BOSS pedals feels like a series of big bangs for guitar effects, the tremors still felt in the modern sector. The CE-1, for example, was the first stepping stone towards the Japanese company's dominance of the chorus effect class, with that pedal's founding principles still evident in a modern range that includes the CE-2w, CE-5 and CH-1 compacts, alongside multi-modulation units like the MD-200 and MD-500, whose 28 different algorithms are underpinned by state of the art 32-bit floating-point processing.

The PH-1 Phaser, meanwhile, was the starting pistol for a modulation effect with its own hardcore following, that first pedal's DNA still found in the PH-3 Phase Shifter (now massively extended with features like the Rise/Fall modes that allow mindblowing unidirectional phasing). Only a handful of effects fans had even heard of flanger before BOSS developed the BF-1 in 1977 (today, the stereo BF-3 is the global benchmark). Similarly, BOSS's game-changing DM-1 Delay Machine of 1978 is now saluted as a stone-cold trailblazer. Transmuting the delay effect from tape-based units such as Roland's Space Echo devices into a more practical stompbox format, it evolved into the DM-2 Delay compact pedal in 1981.

3. Because the market grew to trust the qualities common to all BOSS pedals, notably reliability and great tone, BOSS could afford to develop interesting variations on successful themes such as the DS-2 Turbo Distortion, which built on the success of the ageless DS-1

1977
First BOSS compact pedals: OD-1 Over Drive, PH-1 Phaser and SP-1 Spectrum

1978
DS-1 Distortion (DS-1w Distortion now available in Waza Craft range)

1981
DM-2 Delay: iconic BBD analog delay

Inspect the modern range and you'll not only find an updated tribute to the Delay Machine in the form of the DM-101 but also descendants of the mid-'80s' DD-2 and DD-3 (both the Japanese firm's first digital pedals and the world's first compact digital delays). It seems that with delay, as with so many of BOSS's classic products, what goes around, comes around, sweeping up new advocates in every incarnation. As the great Steve Vai once noted of the DD-7: "It's a beautiful workhorse."

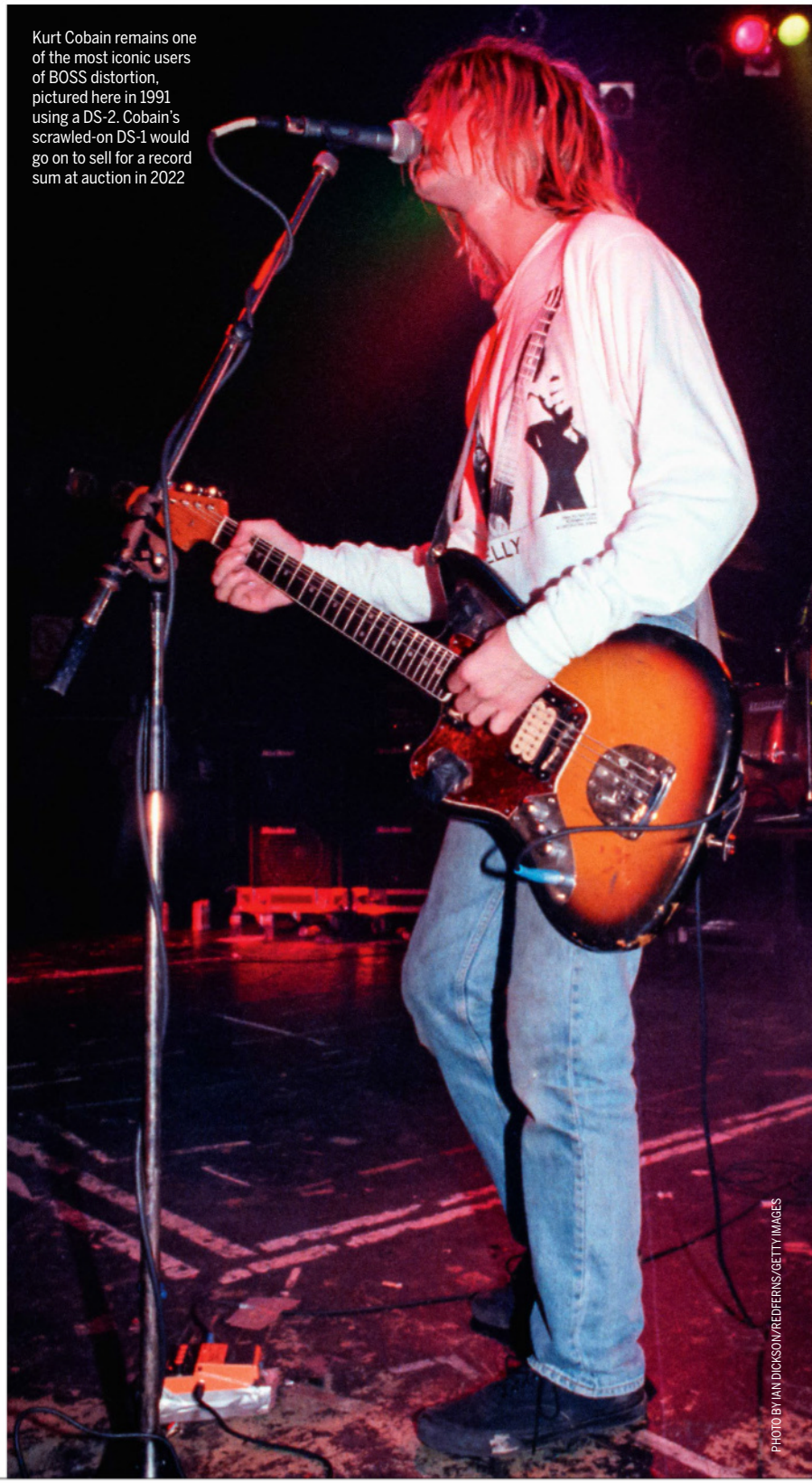
Among those pioneers of 1977, the biggest ripples were felt from the OD-1. For a guitarist to crave dirt in their sound was a notion that went back to The Kinks' Dave Davies slashing his amp speaker cones, if not before. But when it was unveiled at that year's NAMM Show, this banana-yellow stompbox represented a watershed release that brought a whole new sound and concept to the table.

Back in the early '60s, the first fuzz pedals had set out to reproduce a novel kind of signal distortion originating from faulty recording gear. Now, the OD-1 finally delivered on the brief of simulating an overdriven amp at more practical volumes while supplying a rich, characterful, harmonic tone that let the nuances of a player's picking style shine through. Crucially, this new overdrive effect was designed differently to existing distortions: instead of trimming the sine waves equally at the top and bottom of the unaltered signal as they entered the effect circuitry, BOSS's engineers did this clipping asymmetrically. All the players on the stage needed to know, though, was that the OD-1 sounded incredible. As Steinhardt says: "Most guitarists had one of these in front of them at some point."

Once again, the original OD-1 was just the start of BOSS's love affair with grit. As rock 'n' roll swaggered into a new decade – evolving from the classic rock and punk of the 70s to highly technical hair-metallers and the New Wave of British Heavy Metal – overdrive became an essential seasoning that every band applied differently. Meanwhile, BOSS's range ran alongside the scene through every twist, supplying a thousand torn-up tones from its spiraling compact line-up.

Driven By Success

While the OD-1 would remain in production until 1985 (and lives on in the OD-3), players demanding more flexibility jumped at the SD-1 Super OverDrive on its debut in 1981, this latest pedal adding an active tone control to cut or boost treble (it remains in production to this day). Just as seminal was the DS-1, whose knife-through-butter distortion, lengthy sustain, rich harmonics and flow from savage to subtle sounds were made possible by electrically clipping the signal waveform. Famously, Kurt Cobain's heavily battered and graffitied DS-1 sold at auction last year for $75,000. But budget-conscious players will be pleased to hear it's still available as the current standard DS-1 – and also as the DS-1w (part of the Waza Craft series).



Kurt Cobain remains one of the most iconic users of BOSS distortion, pictured here in 1991 using a DS-2. Cobain's scrawled-on DS-1 would go on to sell for a record sum at auction in 2022

PHOTO BY IAN DICKSON/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

1983
DD-2 Digital Delay (world's first digital delay pedal) and TU-12 (world's first automatic chromatic tuner)

1987
RV-2 Reverb: world's first digital reverb pedal

1991
MT-2 Metal Zone: million-selling high-gain unit

1995
BD-2 Blues Driver released: influential low-gain design

2001
RC-20 Loop Station: first Loop Station pedal

The DS-1 might be BOSS's all-time bestseller, but this orange-tinted series boasts another icon in the DS-2 Turbo Distortion of 1987, whose twin modes made it perfect for players who covered both rhythm and lead, and a rig mainstay of stars like John Frusciante of Red Hot Chili Peppers.

As the decade turned, BOSS's presence remained undimmed. Launched in 1991, and going on to sell over a million units, it only took one look at the jet-black MT-2 Metal Zone to know BOSS's highest-gain pedal meant business (and while that distinctive midrange scream is indeed all over heavy-mob albums from the period, it was also used by Prince). Meanwhile, for players who wanted to hear every last drop of soul in their fretwork, there was 1995's BD-2 Blues Driver, its responsive roar evoking the vintage valve amps becoming rarer each year. Green Day's Billie Joe Armstrong nailed the appeal when he explained that: "I used a BOSS Blues Driver to make the solos punch harder on *¡Uno!, ¡Dos!, ¡Tré!*"

Overdrive might be the first effect in many young players' rigs, but it's just the tip of BOSS's remit. During those opening three decades, the firm practically defined every effect on the pedalboard, with releases spanning from 1987's RV-2 Digital Reverb to 1996's SYB-3 Bass Synthesizer (both the first of their kind). Even 'straight-to-the-amp' purists will bend their own rules with a TU-3 Chromatic Tuner.

Soon, the wisdom gained from all those standalone stomps fused into the inaugural BOSS multi-effects,

4. With its methodical approach to product design, BOSS almost single-handedly defined new genres of pedal such as high-gain distortion – as evidenced by its 'chainsaw' voiced HM-2 Heavy Metal pedal

Artist Favorites: ADRIAN UTLEY

"The first BOSS pedal I ever got was a DM-2 Delay, which I bought in the '80s along with a wah-wah pedal. I thought it was amazing. I used to do this Wah Wah Watson type of thing with them both. The DM-2 may have a simple layout with three knobs, but you can get loads of different sounds out of it. I love the switch, too – it's super functional and quiet. You can just stamp it off when it's going mental. That was one of the things with Portishead, cutting echoes abruptly. When I switch it off, I want it off – no trails. Same with sampling and mixing: when you cut the sample, you cut the echo. I always liked that chopped-off-on-the-beat thing.

"You can hear the DM-2 on Portishead's *Roseland [NYC Live]* album. When we first started playing live, I used a Roland RE-301 Chorus Echo. I've got an [SRE-]555 [Chorus Echo] and an [RE]-201 Space Echo at the moment. But I've had so many problems with tape that I'll tend to reach for the BOSS [RE-202] Space Echo now. I love it. It sounds really good, as does the RV-5 Reverb. I bought it for the Spring mode thinking I wouldn't ever use the Modulate mode, but I've never used anything else! It's been on my pedalboard for the last 15 years. In fact, I've got three of them – one for each pedalboard, plus a spare.

"I like to use a BOSS [TR-2] Tremolo and a CE-5 Chorus Ensemble with keyboards. I use the Tremolo to get an on/off square wave effect and the Chorus Ensemble for widening out string sounds. The CE-3 Chorus is really good, too. I've also got a DS-1 Distortion, a CS-3 Compressor, which I used on an acoustic for an extreme sound, and a PS-5 Super Shifter I've recorded with a couple of times to get diving sounds. I recently traded a PN-2 Tremolo/Pan for something with a mate. That pedal is great for panning stuff in a mix. I've also been looking for a VB-2 Vibrato as I always loved the sound of those. And, of course, I've got some Chromatic Tuner pedals. Those are just industry-standard. They're the pedalboard equivalent of Levi jeans and Converse Chuck Taylors.

"I love the compact pedal design – BOSS just got it right! These pedals are really important to all of us."

2007
Fender FBM-1 '59 Bassman & FDR-1 '65 Deluxe Reverb Amp

2014
First Waza Craft pedals: BD-2w Blues Driver, DM-2w Delay and SD-1w Super OverDrive

2015
500 Series pedals introduced to BOSS line-up

2016
Katana guitar amplifier range launched

"THE FIRST BOSS PEDAL I EVER GOT WAS A DM-2 DELAY. IT MAY HAVE A SIMPLE LAYOUT, BUT YOU CAN GET LOADS OF DIFFERENT SOUNDS" *Adrian Utley*

5

as the ME-5 of 1988 signposted us towards the mighty processing power of modern-day units like the GT-100 and GT-1000, both loaded with flawless recreations of the greatest amps and effects in the world. As Johnny Marr told BOSS: "You'd be super-surprised how great the drives and distortions are with the COSM modeling technology. This [GT-100] that you can throw in a bag and stick in the boot of your car – only 10 years ago, you'd need a 15 or 20U rack."

In 2001, as the Japanese firm crossed into the new millennium, its next release actively set the course of the music scene. The sound-on-sound tracking made possible by the original RC-20 Loop Station – pack-leader of the new Twin Pedal series – was initially used by solo guitarists to turn their one-man shows into epic symphonies. But the modern Loop Station range – culminating in the six stereo tracks of the RC-600 – can be found at the feet of vocalists, beatboxers, DJs and more. "I got a loop pedal when I was 14," says Ed Sheeran, whose stadium-filling career began with the RC-20XL at his feet.

But for every superstar using BOSS, there's a thousand more passionate up-and-comers relying on this hardware to carry them forward. 50 years since the Japanese company's touchdown, every sound in your head can be found somewhere within that kaleidoscope of effects, and all of them are waiting at every music store in the world. "Why is BOSS such an important brand in the story of guitar effects?" ponders Daniel Steinhardt. "I think it comes down to two main things: innovation and accessibility. Since I was a kid, I've never walked into a music store without finding BOSS pedals available. Regardless of your location, you could easily get your hands on them, and they consistently delivered superb sound."

5. Past, present and future always interweave and inform one another at BOSS. The tonal lessons learned in making benchmark analog pedals in the 1970s, such as the DM-2, find expression today in digital pedals that sound as vibey as their analog forebears, such as the recent, superb RE-202 recreation of the RE-201 Space Echo tape delay

As the BOSS story reaches 2023 with another fistful of game-changing gear – including the NS-1X Noise Suppressor, BP-1w Booster/Preamp and pedal versions of Roland's legendary SDE-3000 rack gear – nobody could deny it's been quite a half-century. And as Yoshihiro Ikegami concludes, the best way to treat a storied past is as a springboard into the future. "BOSS's 50-year history is the foundation on which we stand, and it's essential to respect and cherish it. At the same time, we must continue to have the courage to seek breakthroughs. Our philosophy should guide us as we explore new frontiers in music technology. The dedication and hard work that have brought us to this point should inspire us to reach even greater heights..."

"THE DEDICATION AND HARD WORK THAT HAVE BROUGHT US TO THIS POINT SHOULD INSPIRE US TO REACH GREATER HEIGHTS" *Yoshihiro Ikegami*

2019
200 Series pedals introduced to BOSS line-up

2021
TB-2w Tone Bender: collaboration with Sola Sound

2023
DM-101 Delay Machine, SDE-3000D Dual Digital Delay and RV-200 Reverb

THE HOLY TRINITY

Limited to a production run of just 7,000 units each – and featuring one-off finishes – BOSS's 50th Anniversary DS-1, SD-1 and BD-2 are the ultimate collector's editions

Words
Henry Yates
Photography
Olly Curtis

BOSS DS-1-B50A Distortion

It is, quite simply, the best-selling BOSS compact pedal of all time – deployed in a thousand different genres since 1978, putting dynamite under the heels of everyone from Prince to Kurt Cobain. Whether in the form of the revolutionary original unit or the new DS-1-B50A release with limited-edition finish, there's more to that iconic orange stompbox than meets the eye.

Among the unique features of these 50th Anniversary pedals is a dedicated four-digit serial number, found on the rear of the unit

With BOSS engineers hitting on the masterstroke of a two-stage circuit that incorporated both op-amp and transistor gain stages, the result is a unique, character-rich distortion with full-bodied bottom-end, far removed from the inferior drive pedals of the era. For open-ended flexibility, the familiar line-up of Tone, Level and Distortion controls lets you dial up anything from subtle boost to room-shaking gain – all while allowing the flavor of your guitar, pickups and amp to shine through. A stone-cold classic, then and now.

BOSS SD-1-B50A Super OverDrive

Having invented the overdrive concept with the OD-1 in 1977, BOSS launched the SD-1 four years later to perfect it. Crucially, where its big brother had offered two controls, Level and Overdrive, this latest arrival of 1981 raised the sonic options through the roof with an additional Tone dial, letting players cut or boost highs in real time, and all underpinned by a circuit designed to beautifully break up the tone while retaining the intrinsic character of the instrument and the subtleties of the fretwork.

Those revolutionary foundations remain fundamentally unchanged in the SD-1-B50A edition, which, like its stablemates here, has a silver thumbcrew, gold-capped knobs, commemorative anniversary emblem, plus a dedicated four-digit serial number and bespoke packaging. Of course, it still supplies the glorious harmonic-rich roar that identifies the SD-1 from a single riff – alongside the open-ended tone-shaping that has drawn players as eclectic as Eddie Van Halen, Richie Sambora and Mark Knopfler. If you've never welcomed the legend to your pedalboard, now's the time.

BOSS BD-2-B50A Blues Driver

Don't be misled by the name: the BD-2 certainly excels at blues and blues-rock, but since 1995 this genre-crossing blue brick has been the drive unit of choice for any guitarist who wants to hear the soul in their fingers. Channeling classic valve amp distortion, the Blues Driver complements every element of your rig while capturing the playing nuances that lesser filth pedals miss, from the shiver of vibrato to the plectrum attack.

With Level, Gain and Tone controls, the BD-2 is supremely flexible in operation – some players even use it as a simple boost – while finding the sonic sweet spot will reward you with a super-responsive serving of old-school grit. With A-list exponents spanning from Radiohead's Jonny Greenwood to Kevin Parker of Tame Impala, choose the BD-2-B50A Blues Driver and you'll be in good company.

ANATOMY OF A BOSS PEDAL

10 pedal design features popularized by BOSS

Words
Stuart Williams

Multi-Function LED

This LED comes on when your BOSS pedal is engaged and indicates that the pedal is on and working. Its other useful function is to let you know when your battery is running low on juice: if your effect is on but the LED doesn't light up, it's time to change the battery.

Battery Thumbscrew

Early BOSS pedals featured a slotted version, but the thumbscrew makes quick battery changes a doddle, without the need for any additional tools. Plus, thanks to its hinged cover, you won't even need to disconnect or remove the pedal from your 'board.

Battery Compartment

What's clever about a battery compartment? BOSS pedals house the battery away from the circuit board, so in the event of a leak you're unlikely to ruin your pedal. It's kept in position by a comfortable fit, reinforced with foam, so you won't strain the battery clip.

Die-Cast Housing

The iconic BOSS pedal housing has remained a consistent form factor since the OD-1 was introduced in 1977. This die-cast housing is strong enough to withstand being run over – but, being aluminum, remains light enough for you to carry a 'board full of them.

Silent Switching

BOSS was an early adopter of electronic switching, removing the problematic pops and clicks that can be introduced when operating mechanical, latching switches. What's more, BOSS footswitches undergo a thorough 100,000-press test using bespoke machinery to ensure they won't let you down.

Pedal Base

Every BOSS compact pedal features a rubber-coated baseplate. Not only does this element of the design add grip and withstand drag from your cables if you're using it without a pedalboard, but it can also keep the pedal in position up to a 60-degree angle.

Power Jack

Batteries are fine, but what if your PP3 runs out of juice mid-set? BOSS compact pedals removed this problem from the outset with the inclusion of a power supply jack, which – along with the center-negative pin configuration – is now an industry standard.

Stepped Control Section

Many early stompboxes were put together in flat, flush-profiled boxes. It seems obvious these days, but BOSS's stepped control section takes the risk out of knocking (or worse, damaging) the pedal's controls while switching with your feet.

Color-Coding

All BOSS compact pedals adhere to the same dimensions, along with similar layouts. So, to make it easier to spot which pedal you're about to stomp on at a glance, BOSS was one of – if not the – first to color-code its stompers by effects type.

Switch Plate

A further, often-overlooked feature of all BOSS compact pedals is the large switch plate. This minimizes the target area on a dark stage, meaning you'll never fail to engage or bypass the pedal. It's also covered with non-slip rubber, just to be sure.

MASTER CRAFT

If classic tones with custom voicings and enhanced functionality is what you're after, in a package that's built to the highest possible quality, Waza Craft is for you...

Words
Jamie Dickson
Photography
Olly Curtis

The cult appeal of effects pedals has exploded in recent years and one manifestation of that has been the rise of modded versions of classic pedals by BOSS. But while imitation may be the sincerest form of flattery, BOSS saw this as an opportunity to offer something better: boutique-grade versions of classic BOSS pedals and all-new premium pedals designed by its own team of tone experts. This was how BOSS's *de facto* custom shop – 'Waza Craft'– was born in 2014.

In Japan, the term 'Waza' – represented by the kanji character 技 – means 'art and technique'. Accordingly, BOSS pedals bearing that emblem are the highest quality, in terms of design and craftsmanship, that the company offers and are built exclusively in Japan. They also address a problem that many unofficially modded versions of BOSS pedals have suffered from – in the process of squeezing new sounds from classic circuits, modders often lost the essence of what made the original pedal great.

"Many of them made a difference in sound by adding or replacing parts," says Mitsuhiro Wakiyama, division head general manager, Effector Development Department, and one of the key members of the team that developed Waza Craft. "Changing the components produces a sound that is different from the original – however, the original quality is lost. Waza Craft was born because we know that we can advance to a higher level without losing the original quality. Because we know the original – and build the circuit from scratch – we can create sound with more freedom, while maintaining the original quality. This [Waza Craft concept] was based on the proposal of Yoshi Ikegami, who was then president of the BOSS Corporation."

> "WAZA CRAFT WAS BORN [TO] ADVANCE TO A HIGHER LEVEL WITHOUT LOSING THE ORIGINAL QUALITY"
>
> *Mitsuhiro Wakiyama*

With this ethos driving the project forward, BOSS launched the first Waza Craft effects in 2014 with a trio of classic pedals that had each been given the 'hot-rod' treatment by BOSS's design team: the BD-2w Blues Driver, the SD-1w Super OverDrive and the DM-2w Delay. Setting the pattern for subsequent Waza Craft releases, the three new compact pedals offered classic tones but also unique, custom voicings accessible at the flick of a switch. For example, the Custom mode on the BD-2w delivers "an expanded tonal range, with increased body and sustain", as BOSS explains it.

But the 'custom' approach didn't end there. Under the hood, the new Waza Craft compact pedals featured boutique-grade components that offered benefits such as a lower noise floor. An instant success, the debut threesome of Waza Craft pedals was followed by equally exacting and tone-tailored versions of BOSS classics, including the CE-2w Chorus, DC-2w Dimension C, DS-1w

1. Malina Moye's powerful guitar style has been built on the foundation of BOSS drive and distortion tones, especially those of the MT-2 Metal Zone, which she credits as having surprising depth and nuance for a distortion

Artist Favorites: MALINA MOYE

"My first BOSS pedal was the DS-1 Distortion. I remember the first time I tried it, I was like, 'This makes me sound killer – I love it!' Certain effects can just up your game. And you can't go wrong with the DS-1.

"I think some of the greatest guitarists are those who figured out alternative ways to get their message across and came up with something different. Experimenting is what makes the guitar great. I like to take that approach with gear, and I discovered one of my favorite pedals is the Metal Zone. I love its rich, buttery sound. It cuts through. The sound is big and full, and it kicks ass in stadiums. It's killer. Also, my guitar still sounds like my guitar – I mean, the Metal Zone doesn't mask its qualities, or what I want the instrument to sound like. Your guitar still has the aesthetics and sweet spots you like.

"The Metal Zone has such a good tonal range – you can make it sound really dark or really light. Each venue is different, so it's great to be able to dial in your tone to suit the room using the EQ. There are so many cool sweet spots and feedback things that sound really good when you solo. I use the Metal Zone and Blues Driver for a majority of solos. I'll often want to just wail with the Metal Zone. The tone is big – it sounds like I'm in a room full of Marshall stacks. The Blues Driver is nice and crunchy. I love it. It feels like a red velvet cake – just a hint of sweetness and not overpowering. That pedal will make you step up as a player and let you hear the intricate things you're doing with the guitar.

"BOSS pedals are 100 per cent reliable when we're traveling. They're extremely well made and can take a beating. And the switching works great – whether you hit it light or hard, it just works. I also love the colors. When it's dark on stage, it's good to be able to see what you're stepping on. It was smart to make them loud colors. I love the yellow overdrives, orange distortions, blue Blues Driver and black Metal Zone with the orange writing. BOSS pedals have personality.

"Thank you to BOSS for creating these beautiful pedals. They help me express my voice and what I'm trying to do."

The BP-1w is the newest addition to the Waza Craft line, offering players the tone-enhancing sound of two classic BOSS preamps and one new clean boost

"EACH PEDAL HAS ITS OWN UNIQUE CHARACTER. IT IS CUSTOMIZED TO A CONTEMPORARY SOUND"

Mitsuhiro Wakiyama

2. It's hard to improve on one of the best-selling pedals of all time, but the Waza Craft DS-1w adds an extra-juicy Custom voicing that brings a mid-rich, expressive new sound to this ageless design

Distortion and many others. If we look more closely at the DS-1w, one of the most hotly anticipated of all Waza Craft pedals when it launched in 2022, we see how Waza Craft unites tradition with progression very clearly.

The DS-1w retains the distinctive crisp distortion that made the original DS-1, launched in 1978, one of the best-selling pedals of all time. But it also introduces a new custom 'C' voicing from its two-stage gain circuit, which *Guitarist* magazine described this way in its review of the DS-1w shortly after it launched: "Switching over to C mode, you'll notice a volume jump as it's 6dB louder with a different midrange profile. The sound is thicker with the mids poking forward, giving more presence to cut through a mix, and that extra 6dB offers much more leeway in adjusting the Level for a boost. What's more, there's increased sensitivity to picking and volume knob control, engendering a more dynamic playing experience suited to a range of musical scenarios."

> "EACH PART IS CAREFULLY SELECTED AND THE ANALOG CIRCUIT IS EQUIPPED WITH EVERY DETAIL"
>
> *Mitsuhiro Wakiyama*

Mitsuhiro Wakiyama of BOSS explains the design approach behind the DS-1w and other pedals in the Waza Craft range even more succinctly: "Each pedal has its own unique character. It is customized to a contemporary sound... while taking advantage of the original qualities," he reflects.

It's important to note that Waza Craft isn't just about creating pedals for tone connoisseurs but about putting enhanced functionality in the hands of guitarists. Take the example of the Waza Craft TU-3w Chromatic Tuner. Based on the globally popular TU-3 tuner, the TU-3w offers signal-chain enhancements that will appeal to tech-savvy players with complex pedalboards, including a premium-quality signal buffer that can be turned off for true-bypass operation should you need impedance-sensitive pedals downstream of the TU-3w to 'see' unbuffered signal.

3. As well as offering new functions and voicings, Waza Craft pedals also feature enhanced componentry offering lower noise floor and other benefits

It's details such as this that set Waza Craft pedals apart – they are not designed to make BOSS's excellent Standard compact pedals obsolete. On the contrary, Waza Craft pedals are built on the timeless bedrock of those iconic effects. However, Waza Craft pedals do offer customized, premium-quality functions and sounds to guitarists that seek nuanced control of their tone in a superlatively built package.

Waza Craft also gave rise to BOSS's hugely successful Katana range amps, which were developed from tech used in the Waza Amp Head. The philosophy has also been extended to pro-spec tone tools such as the Tube Amp Expander, a variable reactive loadbox, 100-watt analog power amplifier, IR loader and loudspeaker emulator in one. True to the Waza Craft ideal, all of these products open up new horizons for tone aficionados while retaining the core reliability and usability for which BOSS is renowned. The Waza Craft project has also allowed BOSS to create pedals inspired by seminal '60s-era fuzzboxes, such as the TB-2w Tone Bender, and – most recently – pedals that bring together hand-picked elements of other BOSS effects to make an entirely new design.

Tone Boost

Such is the nature of the latest Waza Craft pedal to make its debut, the BP-1w Booster/Preamp. Most guitarists have, by now, recognized how useful and tonally flattering a good 'always on' preamp effect can be, while every player needs a boost from time to time to help solos punch through the mix or drive an amp harder. Keen-eared guitarists also know that some effects not specifically designed to act as boosts nonetheless contain great-sounding preamp circuits. BOSS embraced this idea with the BP-1w, bringing together vintage preamp sounds from the landmark BOSS CE-1 Chorus Ensemble and Roland RE-201 Space Echo, both known for the

flattering tonal character they bring to the signal chain. Engage the pedal's CE-1 or RE-201 modes and you'll discover two classic preamp voices in newly controllable form, which can be used to lift and push your signal or simply add attractive color to your sound.

"The 'CE' mode is based on the preamp sound of the CE-1, and the 'RE' mode is based on the preamp sound of the RE-201," Mitsuhiro Wakiyama says. "But although the sound is based on [those classic effects], it does not just boost the sound; it produces a pleasant saturation for the guitarist. You can also enjoy changes in tone due to differences in input impedance and changes in the guitar volume."

True to the Waza Craft ethos, the BP-1w also features a third, brand-new NAT boost mode that gives a transparent hike in output for when you simply want 'more' of what you've already got. It's one of those pedals with a simple premise but a wealth of tonal flexibility, a tonal utility tool that is anything but workaday in its sonic influence.

"To achieve these goals, each part is carefully selected and the analog circuit is equipped with every detail," Mitsuhiro Wakiyama says. "This is Waza Craft."

ART & CRAFT *Three Waza Craft Pedals To Try*

DC-2w Dimension C

If you crave shimmering cleans as lush and spatially rich as the best rackmount chorus devices, you should check out the DC-2w. BOSS says the "Dimension is a one-off effect that enhances tonal space", and that certainly captures the floaty, ethereal character of this unique effect, which brings together both the tones of the original Dimension C pedal and studio-grade voices from the rackmount Roland SDD-320 Dimension D. By interactive use of four switches on the front panel, the DC-2w offers the user 20 unique and evocative sounds.

CE-2w Chorus

An irresistible offering for fans of classic modulation pedals, the CE-2w provides guitarists with the era-defining mono chorus tones of the original 80s-era CE-2 Chorus but adds the choice of stereo operation for the first time as well as tones from the equally influential CE-1, putting everything from rotary speaker-style swirls to warm, evocative chorus sounds at your fingertips.

DM-2w Delay

Every guitarist should have a characterful analog delay based on 'bucket brigade' circuitry for those chewy, viscerally exciting echo sounds. Based on the original DM-2 analog delay, launched in 1984, the Waza Craft version also offers a Custom mode with more clarity, for times when a more pristine sound is needed, as well as more than doubling the available delay time.

HISTORY REPEATING

BOSS's trailblazing delay pedals changed the world – now the modern range salutes the Japanese firm's storied past while forging ahead with bold new creations

Words
Henry Yates
Photography
Olly Curtis

Imagine a time before the delay pedal. An era when guitarists couldn't conjure slapbacks or ping-pongs at the click of a footswitch. To anyone who came up during BOSS's half-century reign, the notion is unthinkable. After all, with today's range offering everything from next-gen trailblazers like the DD-500 to modern takes on classic units like the Space Echo, Delay Machine, DM-2, DD-3 and SDE-3000, fans of this vital effect have never had such mindblowing tools under their boots.

But delay wasn't always so accessible or user-friendly. When the original tape echo effect first pricked up ears in the 1940s, it was the preserve of professionals players in top recording studios, and created using bulky mechanical reel-to-reel machines notorious for their expense and impracticality.

BY REINVENTING ITS CLASSIC HARDWARE FOR THE MODERN AGE, BOSS HAS REMAINED HISTORY'S GREATEST EXPONENT OF DELAY

Still, for the select few with access to the technology, astonishing sounds were possible. In subsequent years, a run of tape-based delay units rose and fell, from the Echoplex to the Watkins Copicat. But arguably the first to achieve global use was 1974's RE-201 Space Echo, developed by BOSS's sister company Roland. Outgoing president Yoshihiro Ikegami started his long career at Roland assembling these units – and they're still widely saluted as the greatest tape delay of all-time.

Employing a capstan-driven tape format that reduced the mechanical parts, the Space Echo's branding implied its speciality: unlike simpler rivals, the Roland supplied a widescreen, spacey flavor, sweetened by onboard reverb. As everyone from Hank Marvin to Bob Marley agreed, there was nothing quite like it.

Even so, while the original RE-201 was an industry-standard for studios at the highest level, the original unit's cost and dimensions were a non-starter for the majority of musicians who plied their trade on the stage. Fortunately, by 1978, the fast-rising BOSS company was ready to pick up that gauntlet, having forged its own identity beyond Roland, and now ready to innovate on its own terms.

That year, BOSS launched its first echo unit in the form of the DM-1 Delay Machine, employing the charge-coupled device (CCD) technology usually associated with cameras and offering flexible analog delays of up to 500 milliseconds. While the Space Echo remained more capable in outright performance, the Delay Machine eclipsed it for practicality, with the tank-tough metal chassis and on/off footswitch announcing that delay was easily practical as a live effect for the first time. And soon, with BOSS's early compact stompboxes flying off shelves at the turn of the decade, the company's ever-curious engineers wondered: could the DM-1's revolutionary delay capabilities be shrunk further still?

Evolution Of Delay

In 1981, the DM-2 answered that question in style. Identified by its magenta chassis, this was BOSS's first compact analog delay, now featuring bucket brigade device (BBD) tech – with a huge 4,096 stages – that granted up to 300 milliseconds of delay while making the sound warmer and softer. Just as important, the DM-2's keen pricing granted access to players at every level. As Robert Keeley of Oklahoma-based Keeley Electronics remembers: "The DM-2 was one of the few affordable analog delays you could get in the '80s."

Analog delay would endure – and still has plenty of advocates – but by the early '80s, the digital age was upon us. As with tape echo before it, digital delay was initially the preserve of pro players and high-end studios who could afford rackmount gear like the Roland SDE-3000. Once again, it took a bold move from BOSS to level the playing field, as to the Japanese engineers' happy surprise

PHOTO BY MAT HAYWARD/GETTY IMAGES

Artist Favorites: ED O'BRIEN

"My first delay pedal was a DD-3 [Digital Delay]. Someone had a BOSS half-rack Digital Delay unit at one of our first ever band rehearsals and it sounded immense. After hearing that, I saved up and bought a DD-3. It still sounds good. I've got a DD-3T (with tap tempo) on my current 'board, the one Daniel Steinhardt built for me. The DD-3 has a sound; that '80s digital thing, one of those sounds we all loved. It sounds slightly cleaner than an analog delay, but still has lots of character.

"I also love the DD-5. To me, the DD-3 is the sound of the 80s, while the DD-5 is the sound of the 90s. The DD-5 was key to the sound of *The Bends* and *OK Computer*. It was virtually all DD-5. I didn't use many pedals at the time, but the BOSS DD-5 was one of my favorites because I could get so many different sounds out of it. I love using it for ring modulator-style noises. I play around with that pedal a lot and it's been on every Radiohead pedalboard I've gone out with because it's the only delay that can make those *OK Computer* sounds.

"When I go out on tour again, the [DM-101] Delay Machine is probably going on the 'board. I can store sounds in there, which I can't do with the Electro-Harmonix Memory Man. The Delay Machine is extraordinary. And if I can make the SDE-3000D [Dual Digital Delay] work I'll use that, too, although I'll still need a DD-5. I think the [original Roland] SDE-3000 is amazing. That '80s era of delays was really special, and BOSS totally nailed it. Daniel and I have very similar tastes in delays, and I'm always waiting for his validation. With the SDE-3000D, he said, 'BOSS have knocked it out of the park.'

"Delays are like any pedal inasmuch they have their own character. Each one does something differently and, for me, it's an emotional thing. Like, how do I hear and see the record emotionally? I'm not one of those guys who has one delay and that's my sound. It's an expensive habit – I have lots of delays – but, as you can tell, I'm a big fan of BOSS!"

As technology advanced, so did the hallmark sounds of BOSS delay pedals, from the CCD-based DM-1 through the BBD-based DM-2 to today's multi-functional DM-101

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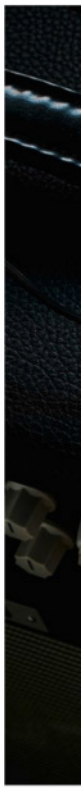
PHOTO BY PETE STILL/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES



1. BOSS deftly mirrored the styling cues of the original RE-201 Space Echo tape delay in its recent, latter-day digital recreation, the RE-202

2. Eddie Van Halen was an iconic early adopter of Roland's original rackmount SDE-3000 digital delay

3. A special edition SDE-3000EVH Dual Digital Delay was co-developed with Eddie Van Halen's long-time tech, Matt Bruck, and Pete Thorn using the late guitarist's original instruments and rigs at the legendary 5150 Studios

they discovered the IC chip from the SDE-3000 would also (just) fit in a compact battery-powered pedal.

As Masao Takahashi of BOSS's Development Division recalled in *The BOSS Book*, transitioning into the digital era was a labor of love ("The DD-2 took the longest of any product to develop"). But that original unit in the ongoing DD series drew a line in the sand upon its 1983 release. Not only the world's first digital delay stomp, but BOSS's first digital pedal of any kind, the DD-2 was also the foundation for 1986's even-more-popular DD-3 that lives on in the form of the modern DD-3T.

For those who'd only known analog delay, that first DD-2 was a revelation, boasting a glassy clarity and vastly increased range that topped out at 800 milliseconds. "You have to include the DD-2 in the list of most influential pedals ever," says *That Pedal Show*'s Daniel Steinhardt. "The first-ever digital delay in a compact pedal. There's no player of my generation who doesn't remember when they first heard that almost one-second delayed repeat. It was truly epic."

But the story of delay is an ongoing saga, not a history lesson. Few guitar effects have crossed more generational boundaries, bled into more genres or stayed so relevant in the modern scene, and BOSS's commitment to innovation – embodied by the motto 'We design the future' – is evident in the post-millennial product line.

"THE DD-5 WAS KEY TO THE SOUND OF 'THE BENDS' AND 'OK COMPUTER'. I COULD GET SO MANY SOUNDS OUT OF IT" *Ed O'Brien*

In 2013, the TE-2 Tera Echo proved a game-changer, powered by the Multi-Dimensional Processing (MDP) whose ambience effect responds to how a player attacks the strings. In 2015, the DD-500 met the demands of the most ambitious music-makers, nailing historic and modern voicings with 12 studio-quality delay modes, while blowing the sonic parameters wide open with constantly evolving system software. "It all ensures the DD-500 ranks among the best high-end delay units available today," wrote Michael Astley-Brown in *Total Guitar*.

New blood is essential, but some legends are too good to be consigned to the history books. Since the mid-'70s, some of BOSS and Roland's most storied hardware has burned brightly before falling out of production and into cult status. The original CCD-based Delay Machine was only in production until 1979, for instance, while the first incarnation of the DM-2 lasted just three years before being superseded by 1984's DM-3.

Since the millennium, however, with the planet's most skilled designers and engineers at its disposal, BOSS has performed an unprecedented magic trick, bringing back the icons that made its reputation, now bolstered by cutting-edge features that propel this vintage hardware squarely into the 21st century. Power up the modern BOSS Space Echo RE-202, for example, and you'll detect all the tonal signatures that built the legend in the '70s, from the character-soaked preamp circuit to the unbeatably atmospheric spring reverb (the dead-on tape emulation even factors in motor speed fluctuations). But this is no museum piece: not only is the reborn pedal-format Space Echo unfailingly reliable on the road, it also ticks contemporary boxes with new features including a doubled delay time, true stereo I/O and a fourth virtual tape head for five more tone combinations.

Likewise, on first inspection of the BOSS DM-101 Delay Machine, you'll be convinced the clocks have turned back.

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In reality, this regeneration of the legend pushes analog delay far beyond what was feasible in the late '70s, with 12 modes delivering every texture of mono and stereo delay imaginable, all created by up to eight internal BBDs, forensically shaped by digital CPU control.

Analog connoisseurs have also cheered the comeback of the BOSS DM-2, with the iconic magenta stompbox now refreshed as the DM-2w Waza Craft, offering both a faithful reproduction of the original's warm vintage effect, and the Custom mode that unlocks a cleaner sound and over twice the delay time (800 milliseconds).

For fans of digital delay, meanwhile, this year's biggest news was the reimagining of Roland's fabled rack gear of the '80s. Now in a pedal format, the BOSS SDE-3000D nails the inimitable musical character of its namesake, while allowing open-ended modern operation with fully independent delays, flexible internal routing, expanded I/O, MIDI support and 100 memories for storing setups. Then there's the stardust of the SDE-3000EVH, with its recreations of the stereo delays that drove Eddie Van Halen's epic three-cabinet live sound (you'll even find eight EVH-curated presets bottling the precise settings from the late maestro's personal delay units).

Times change and technology marches onward, but by reinventing its classic hardware for the modern age – in parallel with brand-new releases – BOSS has defended its crown as history's greatest exponent of delay. Long may those sonic ripples spread.

BOSS DELAY SETTINGS *Five iconic delay sounds to try out today*

VINTAGE SLAPBACK
DM-2w Delay

REPEAT RATE: 3 o'clock
ECHO: 2 o'clock
INTENSITY: 9 o'clock
MODE: C

Slapback delay dates back to the 1950s era of rock 'n' roll and rockabilly and was first created using tape to elicit a distinctive, slappy sound redolent of short room reflections. The DM-2w Delay reproduces this classic thickening effect using BBD analog circuitry.

SPACE ROCK
RE-202 Space Echo

INPUT: Guitar
TAPE: Aged
MODE SELECTOR: 11 (Heads 1, 2 & 4)
SATURATION: 11 o'clock
WOW & FLUTTER: 1 o'clock
REPEAT RATE: 12 o'clock
INTENSITY: 11 o'clock
ECHO VOL: 12 o'clock
REVERB/BASS/TREBLE: Season to taste

The BOSS RE-202 recreates the magic of the legendary Roland RE-201 Space Echo by emulating the unit's preamp, multi-head tape delay and spring reverb. This setting includes the RE-202's extra (fourth) tape head and produces a rhythmic, multi-layered sound.

ESSENTIAL DELAY
DD-3T Digital Delay

E.LEVEL: 12 o'clock
FEEDBACK: 12 o'clock
TIME: 12.5 to 800ms
MODE: S/M/L

Arriving in the mid-'80s, the timeless DD-3 design remains a flexible pedalboard staple of countless guitarists. BOSS's current 'T' version includes a handy tap tempo function accessed either by holding the switch down or via an external stomp switch.

OFFICIAL EDDIE VAN HALEN
SDE-3000EVH Dual Digital Delay

PRESETS: A 01 through B 04

Eddie Van Halen made great use of Roland's SDE-3000 rackmount delay, and this official EVH/BOSS collaboration packs two of these vintage units into one stompbox. Eight officially curated presets instantly recall settings and sounds from the master's expansive live rig.

ED O'BRIEN SETTING
DD-5 Digital Delay

E.LEVEL: 3:30 o'clock
F.BACK: 3:45 o'clock
D.TIME: 8 o'clock
MODE: 2

When it comes to finding new and unexpected sounds, BOSS delay pedals are ripe for exploration. Here, Radiohead guitarist Ed O'Brien shows us how he masterfully manipulates one of his favorites, the DD-5 Digital Delay, to produce some otherworldly effects.

ELECTRIC DREAMS

Your guitar isn't limited solely to traditional sounds. Roland and BOSS have been at the forefront of guitar-based synthesis for decades – and they're showing no signs of stopping

Words
Stuart Williams
Photography
Olly Curtis
& Phil Barker

The late '70s were all about progression, and a synergy between the production of more explorative gear and the experimental musicians using it made for expanded creative horizons. Guitarists were becoming increasingly more comfortable with complex rack-based effects in order to bring the sound of the studio to the stage. And so guitar-controlled synthesizers were the answer to the rhetorical question: why should keyboard players have all the fun?

BOSS's parent company, Roland, recognized this early, and its first foray into the merging of guitars and synths came in 1977 with the GR-500. This powerhouse paired a full stand-mounted analog synth with the GS-500 guitar controller to offer guitar players unprecedented sonic potential, and was the catalyst for placing Roland guitar synths in the hands of the likes of Jeff Beck, Jimmy Page, Andy Summers, Steve Hackett and more.

The GR-500 synth unit comprised five sections that could be blended, modulated and filtered to create a huge-sounding mix of electronic and guitar sounds. Synth-wise, it had the Polyensemble, Bass (which could be assigned to respond to: all six strings; the lowest three strings only; or the lowest two strings only) and Solo Melody modes, as well as a section for the GS-500's magnetic pickup. It even had the ability to pass control voltages from the guitar to an external synth, with the audio looped back and combined with that of the GR-500.

Each of the GR-500's three synthesis modes featured a three-stage envelope (Attack, Decay and Sustain), plus a VCF (Voltage Controlled Filter) whose cut-off frequency could be modulated by pitch, an LFO, an envelope or a foot-operated pedal.

Of course, with all of these options, the GS-500 controller was also bursting with features. So many, in fact, that it required a 24-pin serial cable to send all of its signals to the GR-500. First up are the pickups, with a standard magnetic humbucker joined by Roland's divided pickup – the forebear to the current GK-5 model – to create a signal for each string. But in addition to this, the large pool in the neck pickup position housed a sustainer section, which vibrated the strings EBow-style for infinite sustain. The GS-500 was also fitted with no fewer than six volume controls, a master tone knob, and eight switches to collectively control most of the GR-500's parameters remotely.

1. Small is beautiful: the state-of-the-art GK-5 pickup is the gateway to complex, multi-timbral sounds generated by the formidably powerful BOSS GM-800 Guitar And Bass Synthesizer

THE GR-500 SYNTHESIZER PAIRED WITH THE GS-500 GUITAR CONTROLLER TO OFFER GUITAR PLAYERS UNPRECEDENTED SONIC POTENTIAL

Next-Generation Synthesis

Fast forward to today, and Roland and BOSS have continued the development of their guitar synthesizers, arriving at the most recent: the BOSS GM-800. It's a triumphant display of technological progression, packing a mesmerizing array of classic and contemporary synth sounds into a compact floor-based unit. BOSS's latest GK-5 divided pickup works in tandem with the GM-800 to deliver lightning-fast, accurate tracking. The GM-800 sound generation is based on the same ZEN-Core engine found in Roland's flagship synth workstations, with over 1,200 internal voices ranging from sampled acoustic instruments to widescreen soundscapes. The GM-800 also benefits from an ever-growing range of creative options through Roland Cloud.

The advanced processing means that each of the GM-800's 150 scenes can comprise up to four individual parts, each playing a different sound, plus a rhythm part. Alongside the sounds, there's a dedicated MFX effects processor (with a choice of over 90 effects) and EQ for each part, two master effects processors that can be applied globally, plus a master EQ and compressor.

There's connectivity, too, of course, with MIDI I/O, stereo audio outputs and the facility for two external footswitches or expression pedals. Thanks to the BOSS Tone Studio integration, taking a deep dive into the settings and sculpting huge, multi-timbral synth patches is a process that's made reassuringly simple.

So, through a combination of cutting-edge pitch conversion and tracking, and powerful, rock-solid processing and effects, the GM-800 represents the progression of Roland/BOSS's synth-guitar DNA in a relatively compact and incredibly creative package.

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THE BOSS GM-800 REPRESENTS THE PROGRESSION OF ROLAND/BOSS'S SYNTH-GUITAR DNA IN A RELATIVELY COMPACT AND INCREDIBLY CREATIVE PACKAGE

Debuting in 1977, Roland's GR-500 synth and its accompanying GS-500 guitar controller opened the door to new sonic possibilities. Today, the bleeding edge of guitar-synth tech is embodied by the BOSS GM-800 (left), which packs exponentially more power into its sleek blue enclosure

GAME-CHANGERS

You might know BOSS for its distinctive stompboxes, but the innovation to enable easier music-making goes way beyond effects

Words
Stuart Williams

Over the past 50 years, BOSS has established itself and remained the first name in guitar effects pedals. But outside of its color-generating stompboxes and multi-effects units, the company has turned its attention to many other areas in order to make playing music easier and more inspiring. Here, we're taking a look at three current BOSS products which do exactly that.

Waza-Air Wireless Personal Guitar Amplification System

Headphones are a big deal these days, but BOSS's Waza-Air Wireless Personal Guitar Amplification System is much more than simple 'cans'. As the title suggests, the Waza-Air combines the convenience of jamming alone with premium guitar tones, wireless connectivity and gyroscopic sound immersion via the BOSS Tone Studio App for iOS and Android devices.

WAZA-AIR COMBINES THE CONVENIENCE OF SILENT PRACTICE WITH PREMIUM GUITAR TONES, WIRELESS CONNECTIVITY AND GYROSCOPIC SOUND IMMERSION

The included WL-T Transmitter plugs into your guitar, while the personal monitors receive your signal, as well as Bluetooth for streaming songs and jam tracks from your device, completely cable-free. There are five Katana-derived amp types to choose from, along with 50 effects, and by connecting to Tone Studio you'll be able to edit, store and recall your favorite tones anywhere, at the touch of a button.

The Waza concept is all about innovation, of course, and BOSS has equipped the Waza-Air system with its immersive 3D ambience and spatial audio technology to simulate the sound of your amp in a room – even dynamically shifting with your head movements – in surround, or as a simulated backline. It's a complete solution for portable, wireless, silent practice, without feeling like you're confined to traditional headphones.

Waza Tube Amp Expander

Guitarists love valve amps, but while we can agree that the tone of a cranked valve amp is a sonic delight, it's less of a practical one in today's world. The Waza Tube Amp Expander continues the Waza Craft concept of innovation by providing a do-it-all solution to using your valve amp, live and in the studio. Crucially, it's equipped with a variable reactive load box, which enables you to dial in your amp's sweet spot at manageable volume levels. It also features a 100-watt Class A/B analog power amp that can be used in conjunction with other lower wattage amplifiers, significantly increasing output while expanding options.

Want to record your valve amp in a home environment without resorting to mic'ing up a cab? The Waza Tube Amp Expander also features 22 mic'd speaker cab emulations, with control over nine microphone types and five virtual room options. The whole signal can be routed through the balanced outputs or built-in USB audio

1. BOSS's boundary-pushing Waza-Air system delivers 'amp-in-room' tones enhanced by gyroscopic sensor technology

2. Comfort and durability are integral parts of the Waza-Air design, ensuring nothing gets in the way of your playing

3. The Waza Tube Amp Expander helps players get more from their valve amps. It can give low-wattage amps the power to command big stages or, conversely, it can help you capture the dynamic, complex tones of a flat-out 100-watt head while bringing in-the-room output levels down – and much more besides

4. The ES-8 Effects Switching system not only grants one-touch controllability to groups of your favorite pedals but also boasts its own in-built effects suite, making it a hugely powerful tool

interface, so you can record your amp tone silently. You can even plug in headphones directly and use your valve tones for practicing, too.

ES-8 Effects Switching System

There's never been more choice when it comes to effects, but as our pedalboard requirements grow more sophisticated, what if we want to switch a number of pedals on, off or both all at once? BOSS's ES-8 Effects Switching System not only takes care of this situation but also presents a whole new dimension when it comes to using a collection of individual pedals, by removing the 'linear' nature of individual stompboxes.

BOSS has long been a pioneer in effects switching systems, such as 1982's SCC-700 Sound Control Center, which allowed up to seven pedals to be switched simultaneously. Today, with eight separate effects loops (plus an additional volume loop) and 800 memories, the programmable ES-8 can switch your entire pedal chain – and any combination within it – in and out at the press of a button. It can also rearrange the order of your chain on a patch-by-patch basis, giving you the flexibility of a digital effects unit from a fully analog signal path, while maintaining the finely-tuned tones of your carefully selected pedals.

Handy functionality – including parallel loop configuration, dual amp outputs, MIDI I/O and multiple footswitch/expression pedal connectivity – means the ES-8 can act as a complete switching system for your entire rig. If you want to unlock the full creative potential of your gear, it's a definite game-changer.

OUTSIDE OF PEDALS AND MULTI-EFFECTS UNITS, BOSS HAS TURNED ITS ATTENTION TO OTHER AREAS TO MAKE PLAYING MUSIC EASIER AND MORE FUN

THE POWER & THE GLORY

BOSS's status as an effects heavyweight is set in stone – but lesser-known is how the visionary company reached the summit of the amp sector in under a decade

Words
Henry Yates
Photography
Olly Curtis

Breaking into the modern amp market is not a mission for the faint-hearted. On one side, you'll find the old guard, eternally sworn to the valve technology they created back in the '50s and '60s, still dining out on war-stories of Hendrix, Woodstock and 4x12 backlines looming like monoliths. On the other, the high-tech disruptors, shredding conventional wisdom, casting aside manufacturing tradition, dragging the sector ever-further from physical hardware towards apps and plug-ins.

Both philosophies are valid, and each has its advocates. But if BOSS's status as the second-biggest amp builder in the world proves anything, it's the appetite for products that walk a perfect middle path between tradition and revolution. Inspect the modern BOSS amp range – comprising the Katana, Nextone, Waza, CUBE and Acoustic series – and you'll find hardware that feels reassuringly human, offering the hands-on tangibility that makes plugging into a great amp so satisfying. Look a little closer, though, and you'll detect the innovation that underpins BOSS's design philosophy, with lively and responsive amp sounds called up at the twist of a dial, signature tones crafted using editing software, and a thousand other paradigm-shifting leaps.

To some, BOSS's rise as an amp builder might seem like an overnight success, sparked by the runaway sales of the Katana series from 2016. In fact, to those that know, there's a precedent and considerable pedigree underpinning the boom. Anyone with even a passing knowledge of the amp scene will recall that sister company Roland had already planted its flag in 1975 with the legendary JC-120, a 2x12 combo dubbed the 'king of clean' for its glassy, stereo chorus-sweetened shimmer, seen in the rigs of everyone from Metallica's James Hetfield to The 1975.

> BOSS'S AMPS SATISFY AN APPETITE FOR PRODUCTS THAT WALK A PERFECT MIDDLE PATH BETWEEN TRADITION AND REVOLUTION

Likewise, by 1978, the ultra-portable CUBE series – then a Roland range, rebranded as BOSS in 2021 – gave musicians on the move a professional level of performance for the first time. At the top end, from 2014, the Blues Cube was attracting some of the scene's most discerning names, from Eric Johnson to Robben Ford. As for BOSS, scan the history books and you'll find the brand dipped a toe into the market with tidy practice combos like the MG-10 (released in the mid-'80s and long-discontinued). But it wasn't until the post-millennium era that the Japanese firm truly forged into the amp sector with full intent, capturing the public imagination for something other than its rainbow of globally acclaimed effects pedals.

PHOTO BY JIM DYSON/GETTY IMAGES

1. Since its release in 1975, Roland's legendary Jazz Chorus amplifier has appeared on the stages of many guitar icons – Limp Bizkit's Wes Borland delivers his clean tones with a pair of JC-120s

At The Cutting Edge

Everything changed in 2016. That January, BOSS announced its ambitions and reset the norm with the launch of the 150-watt Waza Amp Head: a four-channel tone machine that earned admiring reviews for the organic, frayed-edge response of its Tube Logic circuitry, delivered through a stylish 2x12 or 4x12 cab. "It's an attractive alternative to a tube head," wrote *Guitar World*, "ready for the biggest stages."

But BOSS had another ace to play, and later that year came the big reveal that sent ripples through the amp scene. Even before you saw the hardware in the flesh, the Katana sounded evocative, aptly named after the traditional curved sword carried by Japan's ancient samurai warriors, in a nod to the new amp's precision and artistry. Just as compelling was the pitch, with a press release welcoming a new amp series that "embodies BOSS's determined pursuit of the ultimate rock sound".

But that first wave of Katana amps – a line-up comprising the Katana-100, Katana-100/212, Katana-50 and Katana-Head – only revealed the true extent of their powers when a player pushed a guitar lead into the input jack. It only took a few riffs to realize that, for the first time, authentic valve-worthy tones and forward-thinking modern features could co-exist in harmony. Uniquely, the Katana hit the neglected sweet

No valves required: from the seminal JC-120 (pictured at the back here) onwards, Roland and BOSS have trailblazed fantastic-sounding amps that do not rely on vacuum tube technology for pro-grade tone. The popularity of the Katana series of amps shows the concept is more valid than ever

ROLAND HAD ALREADY PLANTED ITS FLAG IN 1975 WITH THE LEGENDARY JC-120, A 2X12 COMBO DUBBED THE 'KING OF CLEAN'

2. The BOSS Acoustic Singer Live amp is a next-gen acoustic/vocal amp that offers progressive features such as Acoustic Resonance for natural guitar sounds. It can also analyze your vocals and harmonize on them

3. The Roland Blues Cube was, for many players, a watershed amp – the first non-valve combo that really sounded and felt like an old tweed amp

spot between time-honored and template-breaking philosophies – and sat within reach of budget-conscious working musicians, to boot.

Today, firing up a Katana amp for the first time is still a revelation, the range's garage-band pricing at odds with a professional spec that suggests a boutique recording amp. Since the range was introduced in 2016 it has steadily grown to include: premium Katana-Artist models; the desktop Katana-Air; the newly released Katana-Air EX; and the ultra-compact Katana-Mini. Regardless of the specific model there are features in common. Most players start with the Amp Type dial, cycling their sound between Clean, Crunch, Lead, Brown and Acoustic (Brown offering BOSS's sonic salute to Eddie Van Halen's famously warm and characterful 'brown' sound).

"FOR ALL THOSE GUYS WANTING TO GIG AND KEEP EVERYTHING IN ONE BOX, THE KATANA-ARTIST IS A GREAT OPTION" *Rabea Massaad*

Nominally, then, the Katana could be classed as a 'modeling amp'. But that term doesn't do justice to the gulf between less refined products claiming to recreate famous valve amp tones and the Tube Logic circuitry at the heart of these Japanese-built amplifiers, which genuinely brings the alive-in-your-hands response of a valve glowing red-hot. It's complemented by the Class A/B analog power amp section, which underlines that organic, character-soaked response, and delivers it through custom-designed speakers that make the air move. Meanwhile, the Variable Power Control lets players dig out those same fit-to-burst tones at feasible home volumes.

But perhaps the masterstroke of the Katana range is that it stands on the shoulders of a half-century of guitar-effects innovation. Boasting 60-plus effects, taken direct from BOSS's key stompboxes since the 70s – not to mention the ability to edit, store or deep-dive with the almost-infinite voicings of BOSS Tone Studio software – the Katana feels like a blank canvass, making each guitarist feel like they own a custom-tuned signature amp, no matter how many millions of players start from the same factory-spec foundation. As *MusicRadar*'s Daryl Robertson wrote earlier this year of the Katana-50 MkII EX: "There is no genre this amp cannot do."

It was true, and from its launch in 2016, the Katana swiftly cut a swathe across stages worldwide, appearing everywhere from the backlines of school bands to the rigs of pro players like Andy James, Ola Englund and Rabea Massaad. "The Katana-Artist is a really impressive addition to the range," said the YouTuber of the premium model released in 2018. "For all those guys wanting to gig and keep everything in one box – whether it be all your effects, the functionality, the different tones – this is a great option. I can't fault it. But then, I couldn't fault the other Katana amps..."

Next-Level Amplification

With over one million Katana amps sold, a less adventurous firm might have marked time. But BOSS's next move underlined its refusal to rest on past glories. By 2018, the whispers in gear circles told of a brand-new BOSS amplifier range, pushing the concept of valve-less guitar amps to unprecedented levels. Enter the Nextone. At first glance, these latest combos (originally released in 80-watt Artist 1x12 and compact 40-watt Stage variants) offered a more traditional amp experience, finished with silver-trim grille cloth, featuring familiar Clean and Lead channels and a streamlined selection of core effects (reverb, delay, tremolo and boost).

But the giant leap came in the choice of four Class A/B analog power amp circuits, with a twist of the rotary knob letting players travel through time and cross the Atlantic, choosing between the proud bark of US-style 6L6/6V6 voicings and the creamy roar of the EL34/EL84 valves associated with the golden age of British rock.

Remarkably, the Nextone didn't just sound like a line-up of classic valve amps: it truly felt and reacted like each one of them, with the series' Tube Logic foundation meaning each power amp mode revoiced the entire circuit from input to output. "In use, the Nextone sounds scarily realistic," wrote Nick Guppy in *Total Guitar*. "It's one of the best-sounding solid-state amps on the market."

To excel at one design discipline is hard enough. To excel at two is a rare feat indeed. But in the post-millennium, BOSS is acknowledged as a specialist across both pedalboard and backline, its effects and amplifiers offering a one-stop solution for tone that turns heads. The future of amplification has truly arrived.

TO EXCEL AT TWO DESIGN DISCIPLINES IS A RARE FEAT, BUT BOSS IS ACKNOWLEDGED AS A SPECIALIST ACROSS 'BOARD AND BACKLINE

KATANA VS NEXTONE: *At A Glance*

If you're in the market for a professional, high-caliber value amp, you might find your shortlist boils down to the BOSS Katana or Nextone and wonder which is right for you. Of course, the best approach is always to trial both amps at your local Roland stockist and trust your ears. But each product is conceived for a subtly different player, and it's a useful jump-off to grasp the fundamental differences.

The Katana series is unbeatable for players who demand digital flexibility. Perhaps you're in a busy function band with every song in the setlist requiring a different tone. That's where the Katana's huge variety of amp types and onboard effects becomes invaluable: it's like a portable library of all-time-great tones (and that's before you even factor in the BOSS Tone Studio editor).

As such, while these amps lean towards rock, no genre is off-limits. By comparison, the Nextone doesn't have quite as many built-in sonic options. But if your priority is organic-sounding, authentic recreation of history's greatest valve tones – complete with a reactive Class A/B power amp – you simply won't find a better contender than this unique new type of amp.

COLLECTIBLE COMPACTS

The BOSS compact pedals may be colorful little objects of desire to many, but it seems that some of them are more desirable than others...

Words
Trevor Curwen & Jamie Dickson
Photography
Olly Curtis & Phil Barker

BOSS revolutionized the pedal world with the 1977 release of its first compact pedals – the OD-1 Over Drive, PH-1 Phaser and SP-1 Spectrum. Since then, the compact series has been ubiquitous and there can't be many guitarists who haven't owned one at some time. But while there's a massive range of BOSS compacts available to buy new, yet more models have been discontinued over the years. Perhaps they were ahead of their time, or possibly their qualities were overlooked in a crowded marketplace – and thus only remained in production for a couple of years. Today, the very scarcity of such pedals has granted them a cachet and collectibility that has made them among the most sought-after effects in the world.

You only have to look at the Instagram pages of collectors such as @boss_pedal_collector and @boss_pedal_aficionado to see that the BOSS collecting bug is not purely about visual impact or a completist desire to own them all – many early BOSS pedals are desirable for their unique sonic qualities and can still play a part at the cutting edge of music. Before we take a look at the rarest compact pedals, however, we must first give an honorary mention to some earlier and larger BOSS effects.

Although Roland had released pedals earlier (the AP-7 Jet Phaser and AF-100 BeeBaa fuzz to name just two), the first pedal to appear under the BOSS name was the CE-1 Chorus Ensemble in 1976. BOSS had previously put the newly minted chorus effect into its synths and JC Jazz Chorus amps, but the CE-1 put it into a pedal and these, long out of production, are still very much in demand today and not just with guitarists – you'll find many a CE-1 used in the recording studio for its spacious stereo sound. There were other larger-format BOSS pedals from the period, too, such as the DB-5 Boss Driver (used by Rory Gallagher in the 90s), BF-1 Flanger and the GE-10 Graphic Equalizer, all of which are now rare and collectible, but let's move on to those discontinued compacts...

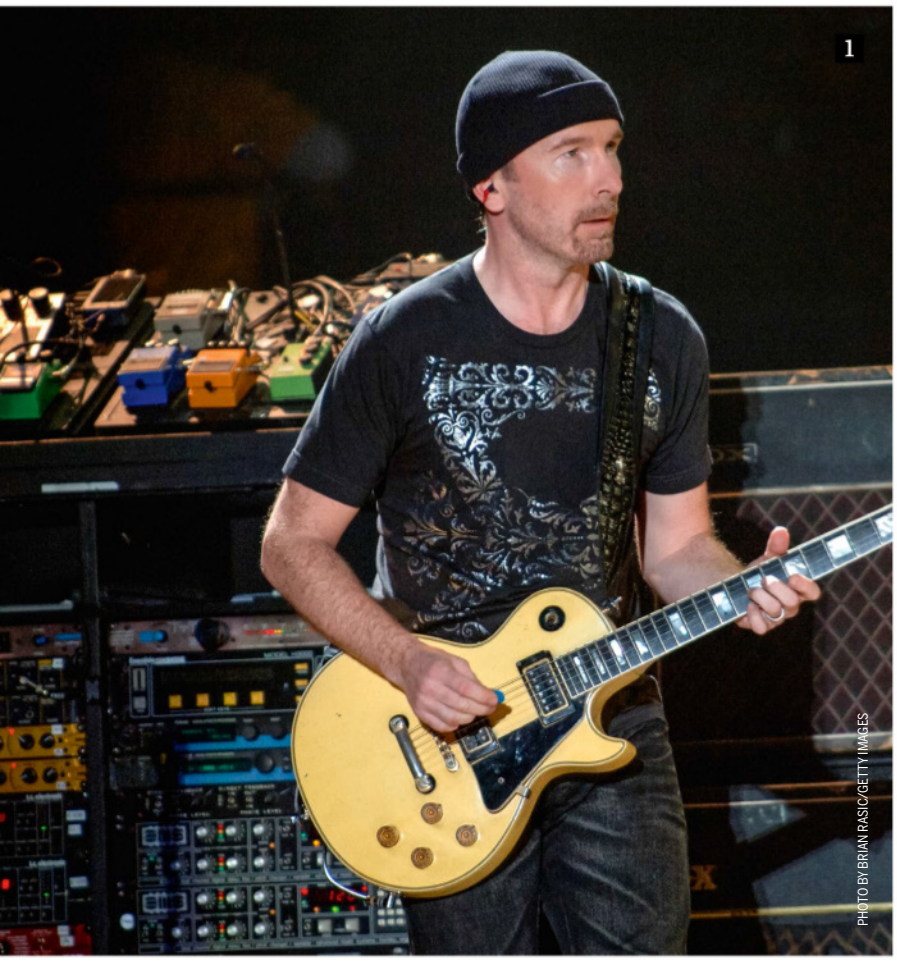

PHOTO BY BRIAN RASIC/GETTY IMAGES

1. The Edge used the PW-2 Power Driver on U2's Vertigo tour, but the pedal was relatively obscure for some years before rocketing up in desirability in recent times

Slow Burners

First up, the SG-1 Slow Gear, a black auto-swell pedal – with its circuit DNA rooted in the NF-1 Noise Gate – that was only in the BOSS catalog for three years. It muted the attack and swelled the volume of a note's tail, while Sensitivity and Attack knobs allowed the user to tailor the effect. BOSS actually puts digital Slow Gear emulations in its large GT-series floorboards, but if you want the real thing they occasionally come up for sale and command a price that matches their scarcity. Online marketplace Reverb.com reports that, in 2022, vintage SG-1s changed hands for an average price of $550, with some examples fetching nearly $650.

Slightly longer-lived in its original production run, the HM-2 Heavy Metal was produced from 1983 until 1991 – the same year BOSS introduced the perennially popular MT-2 Metal Zone. It is very much the sound of Swedish death metal and in demand by anyone wanting that original buzzsaw sound. And it seems that's an itch some people simply have to scratch – original examples have seen a 12 per cent rise in value over the past year alone, according to Reverb.com.

Staying with drive effects, the FZ-2 Hyper Fuzz (1993 to 1997), closely related to the vintage Univox Super-Fuzz, offered two distinct fuzz voices and gain boost combined with a two-band active EQ for some tremendously powerful and now highly sought-after sounds. More intriguing still, however, is the recent surge in interest in the PW-2 Power Driver, available from 1996 until 2000 and used by The Edge on U2's Vertigo tour. A drive pedal, it has the expected Level and Drive knobs, plus Fat and Muscle knobs for control over bass and mids. Yet despite its relatively brief association with U2, it remained a sleeper until relatively recently – but made up for lost

Irish blues-rock legend Rory Gallagher was a prolific user of BOSS pedals in the later stages of his career, including the large-format DB-5 Boss Driver, pictured below

THE VERY SCARCITY OF DISCONTINUED BOSS PEDALS HAS MADE THEM AMONG THE MOST SOUGHT-AFTER EFFECTS IN THE WORLD

2. As the forefather of a long line of era-defining BOSS chorus pedals, the original CE-1 commands used prices in line with its historic-kit cachet

time during the past two years and saw the single largest jump in value of any BOSS pedal during that period, according to Reverb.com.

Another pedal that features on many collectors' wishlists is the 1984 DF-2 Super Distortion & Feedbacker, a distortion pedal with a feedbacking function that sustained a note if you held down the footswitch, and had a name change to Feedbacker & Distortion in 1985, making the earlier version more collectible. Moving away from the dirt pedals, one of the first trio of pedals released in 1977, the SP-1 Spectrum was in production for about four years. Its role was to boost a select band of frequencies. The boosted frequency was variable between 500Hz and 5kHz via the Spectrum knob, while a Balance knob set the blend of normal and EQ'd sound. The PN-2 Tremolo Pan, meanwhile, was a precursor to the TR-2 Tremolo pedal, but, unlike that pedal, features stereo outputs, allowing it to be used as an auto-panner. Besides the standard Rate and Depth controls you get four selectable modes – tremolo in square and sawtooth flavors or panning in both flavors.

> "THE CE-1 PREAMP IS A SECRET WEAPON, AS IS THE RE-201 PREAMP. BOTH HIT THE FRONT-END OF THE AMP PRETTY GOOD" *Joe Bonamassa*

Bag any one of the above and you'll be the envy of many a BOSS aficionado and the possessor of a unique tone machine.

What Makes A Pedal Collectible?

There are several factors that may have a bearing on both the collectibility and the cost of discontinued pedals. One thing to note is that the earlier pedals were made in Japan while production later moved to Taiwan, and those Japanese units are the more collectible and

3. Fuzz pedals form their own genre within the collectible pedals market and BOSS is very much a part of it through sought-after effects such as the FZ-2 Hyper Fuzz

4. The 'history reimagined' appeal of the BOSS Waza Craft Tone Bender TB-2w saw it sell out almost instantly on launch in 2021

Artist Favorites: JOE BONAMASSA

"I've been using a DD-3 [Digital Delay] for as long as I've had an effects loop – about 30 years! I run them in the effects loop because it's clean and sounds right to me. It's the only delay I know of where all the knobs can be set at noon and you're good. To me, BOSS delay is still the industry standard. I know they're up to the DD-8 now, but I still love using the DD-3 or even the [DSD-2] Digital Sampler/Delay, which is similar to a DD-2. All the early BOSS Digital Delay pedals and '80s Roland rack gear, like the SDE-3000, sound so organic. At the time, 12- and 16-bit digital processing was some of the best tech available and it still sounds amazing.

"I'm old-school. I like the BOSS choruses – including the CE-1 Chorus Ensemble – and I have a couple of Roland Space Echo units. The tape delay sound melts away beautifully; it almost feels like reverb. They do a thing. If you want Andy Summers, 1983, get a CE-1 Chorus Ensemble – chorus, a little slapback and some reverb, and that's pretty much it. The CE-1 preamp is a secret weapon, as is the RE-201 [Space Echo] preamp. Both hit the front-end of the amp pretty good. A lot of people run the CE-1 on the low input setting, but I like to use the high input. It does something unique. It really loves a clean amp. Making up the volume and hitting the input hard on the amp gives you kind of a crunch thing. I like to put a compressor after the CE-1 so it's hitting the front of the amp with a little bit of compression.

"I also like the [BD-2] Blues Driver, but my favorite BOSS dirt pedal – and I know this is going to sound really fucking strange – is the [MT-2] Metal Zone. Being a child of the '80s, I really dug the Metal Zone. I was a Metal Zone guy. I thought you could get some cool midrange things out of it with a clean amp. Just because it's called the Metal Zone, that doesn't mean you need to run the gain all the way up. The OD-1 [Over Drive] was good, too, and the silver BOSS Fuzz pedals are interesting – especially the one they did with Sola Sound: the [TB-2w] Tone Bender."

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expensive, especially if you find a really early one with a silver (rather than black) thumbscrew to access the battery compartment. The label on the base of the pedal also has a significance, which is why you'll often see pedals listed as 'black' or 'silver label', and then there are different versions and circuit revisions that have taken place over the years.

As an example, let's take a look at the humble DS-1, the orange distortion pedal that started life in 1978 and has never been out of production. Let's face it, there are loads of these about, but, barring the really rare commemorative models out there, the most revered early version is made in Japan, has a silver screw and black label. It's perhaps really about the circuitry, though – early versions used a Toshiba preamp chip, but in 1994 the pedal (by now made in Taiwan) was redesigned to use an op-amp. There have been other changes since and while all DS-1s may be in the same distortion ballpark, there's plenty for players and collectors to think about.

Another strand to this story is the BOSS collaborations with other companies, starting with pedals officially licenced by Fender and launched in 2007; the FDR-1 and FBM-1 were designed to recreate the sound of Fender amps, the '65 Deluxe Reverb and '59 Bassman respectively. There was also the FRV-1 '63 Fender Reverb based on the standalone reverb tank immortalized in surf music.

Collaborative Collectibles

Perhaps the most sought-after of collaborative pedals, though, isn't quite so old. The TB-2w was a collaborative effort between BOSS and Sola Sound in 2021 to create a compact pedal version of the renowned 60s fuzz, the Tone Bender Professional MKII. This was a limited run of just 3,000 pedals, the limited run being a necessity due to component availability, namely the germanium transistors at the heart of the circuit. These, of course, all sold out rather quickly (*Guitarist* magazine couldn't even get hold of one to review) and, needless to say, used examples come at a premium. In fact, while prices of rare vintage BOSS pedals may have softened somewhat recently, Reverb.com reports that the TB-2w remains hot property. Occasionally fetching four-figure sums since their release, these pedals regularly change hands for several hundred dollars.

Coming right up to date, another collaboration is with JHS Pedals and was created to celebrate the 40th anniversary of compact pedals. The JB-2 Angry Driver is a melding of the BD-2 Blues Driver with JHS Pedals' Angry Charlie. While this is not exactly a collectible at the moment as it is still readily available, it might not always be around. Maybe you should get one while you can...

Now, while many BOSS pedals have disappeared, they can also come back. So far we haven't mentioned such revered early classics as the CE-2 Chorus, the DM-2 Delay or the DC-2 Dimension C, all of which are still sought after in their original versions. The thing is, if it's the sound of these pedals that you want, rather than a vintage example, you need look no further than the Waza Craft series of premium versions of much loved and long gone pedals (see page 12). The CE-2w, DM-2w, DC-2w and several others are all available now, but perhaps they will become the unobtainium collector's items of the future.

UNDER THE INFLUENCE

Inspiring artists and gear designers alike, BOSS gear has shaped much of the last half-century of music. Here, we consider the company's impact on guitar culture

Words
Henry Yates

Half a century is a long time in rock 'n' roll. Just as we've witnessed a thousand bands and genres blow up then burn out since 1973, scanning the archives reveals a long line of gear that launched to fanfare but left the faintest of thumbprints.

With no shortage of game-changing releases to its name – from the world's first digital delay in the form of the DD-2 to the OD-1 pedal that single-handedly invented the overdrive concept – BOSS could have rested on past glories. But in 2023, as we find the Japanese company at the heart of the modern music scene, a position it has held for 50 years, it's a glowing testament to a lifelong ethos of letting the players of each era become the musicians they want to be.

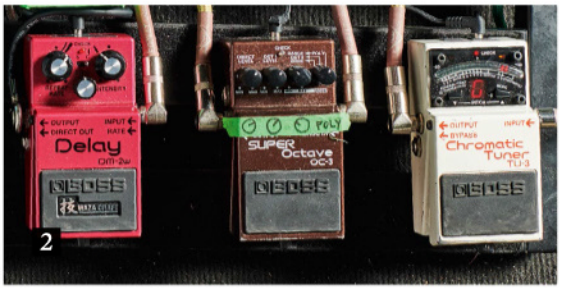
So, what is the secret to BOSS's enduring status as the brand that built the world's pedalboard? Perhaps it's partly down to practical benefits. After all, one of the seismic shifts sparked by BOSS is that effects pedals no longer have the whiff of elitism, but are viewed as everyday tools for working musicians. BOSS pedals have become a byword for affordability, availability and unbeatable toughness: whoever you are, wherever you're based, whatever your budget, you can pick one up from your local music shop and trust it to survive on the toughest gig circuit.

"You know, not only did the BOSS sound become the staple," says Robert Keeley, founder of Keeley Electronics, "but they were also built extraordinarily well. Once BOSS has made a pedal, it just works exactly right. The construction quality, the switching, the buffers – they just provided all the right features to guitar players to make it a truly satisfying experience."

Just as important, compared with the early effects pedals that typically featured one footswitch, no dials, another BOSS departure was to add onboard tone-shaping features that let players of every persuasion dig out their signature sound. "It's one thing to say that a chorus pedal sounds great, but it's another to be so inspired by the sound that you create a tune around it," says Daniel Steinhardt of *That Pedal Show*. "This, I think, is the most significant contribution made by BOSS. So much music has been inspired by the sound of these little boxes. When BOSS released a new pedal, you simply had to try it out."

Infinitely flexible and accessible to all, it's no surprise that BOSS gear has been used on countless landmark recordings since 1973. Yet what's most interesting to note is that these products are not tied to any one single genre but bend to the vision of whoever plugs them in. The Cure's Robert Smith, Steve Vai, Kurt Cobain and Glenn Frey of the Eagles are players with nothing obvious in

1. Laura-Mary Carter of Blood Red Shoes finds the DM-2w Waza Craft Delay to be "quite synthy... you can make it sound like some of the parts I made on the album [*Get Tragic*]"



2. Laura says of her OC-3 Super Octave that it offers "pure low-end that you can build a tone with", alongside distortion pedals

3. The late Irish blues and rock hero Gary Moore was just one of the legions of guitarists who have relied on the TU series of tuners

4 The battered enclosure of Gary's HM-2 Heavy Metal pedal bears witness to heavy use, seen here alongside a DSD-3 Digital Sampler that was also part of Moore's pedal arsenal

Australian songsmith Kirin J Callinan performs with a multi-hued crescent of 17 BOSS pedals at London's O2 Shepherd's Bush Empire, UK in 2018

common, but all have used the DS-1 Distortion in wildly different contexts. While Josh Homme, Kirk Hammett, Joe Perry and Kevin Shields of My Bloody Valentine are unlikely to appear on the same festival bill, the DD-7 Delay has featured on the pedalboards of all four.

As for the TU-3 Chromatic Tuner, it's a strong contender for the world's most ubiquitous pedal. "That one is my favorite – it makes everything else sound good," says Lzzy Hale of Halestorm. "You can have the best pedals in the world, but if the guitar's out of tune..."

Genre aside, rolling generations of musicians have found a place for BOSS gear at the heart of their pedalboards. Old-school virtuosos like Eric Johnson, Joe Satriani and Gary Moore might have been early adopters, but they passed the baton to Mark Bowen and Lee Kiernan of Bristol alt-rockers Idles (who between them are proud owners of the VB-2w Vibrato, TU-3w Chromatic Tuner, PS-6 Harmonist and RE-20 Space Echo). From Jake Bugg's stinging vintage/modern indie-folk (bolstered by the BD-2 Blues Driver and AC-3 Acoustic Simulator) to Australian maverick Kirin J Callinan (who uses a massive 17 BOSS pedal on stage to recreate the fearless sonic adventurism of albums like *Embracism*), the Japanese brand has always surfed the zeitgeist right alongside the new wave of players.

THESE PRODUCTS ARE NOT TIED TO ANY ONE SINGLE GENRE BUT BEND TO THE VISION OF WHOEVER PLUGS THEM IN

PHOTO BY OLLIE MILLINGTON/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

5. Robert Keeley describes the BOSS SL-2 Slicer as "magical-sounding gear" and salutes the company's impeccable quality control

"You plug enough gear into each other and it fills up the whole space and there's a song," considers Callinan of his experimental writing process. "You jam it out and then when the lyrics finally come, it might be six months down the track. But also, you can't give the gear all the credit because no two people sound the same with the same piece of equipment. A lot still has to come from yourself."

And while BOSS has been present at the birth of every rock 'n' roll moment that matters, even the world's greatest designers refer to these products as their benchmark. "I've been influenced by BOSS on so many levels," says Keeley. "If I'm ever thinking, like, 'How am I gonna fix this problem?', I'll say, 'Well, how did BOSS fix it?' I still compare my Keeley stuff to all the brand-new BOSS stuff to make sure our buffers are switching as quiet as theirs and the noise levels are comparable. It's impossible to beat modern-day BOSS stuff. You have to know where the bar is. And you have to keep an eye on the BOSS products to know what's going on. Like the new [SL-2] Slicer – that's a magical-sounding piece of gear. I need to buy one of those."

> WHATEVER FORM THE GEAR OF THE FUTURE TAKES, TRUST BOSS TO DESIGN IT IN THE IMAGE OF THE MUSICIANS ON THE GROUND

The SY-200 Synthesizer unlocks yet more sonic doors for guitar players in 2023 – it's intriguing to consider what will come next from BOSS

BOSS might be the sound of the last half-century, but perhaps even more exciting is the mark it will surely make on the next. Whatever form the guitar effects and amps of the future take, trust the Japanese company to design them in the image of the musicians on the ground. As outgoing BOSS president Yoshihiro Ikegami explains: "Our goal is to remain at the forefront of the music technology industry. We'll keep focusing on creating high-quality, user-friendly products that inspire musicians. Our dedication to innovation will drive us forward. We're excited to see where the next 50 years will take us..."

Artist Favorites: LEE KIERNAN, IDLES

"My first BOSS pedals were an Over Drive, Distortion and Compressor. This was around the year 2000. Every weekend, I'd go into Sound Control in Bristol – which is now called PMT – and there were loads of BOSS pedals in there. When I joined Idles about 10 years ago, the boys were like, 'You're going to need some delay and reverb effects,' so I instantly bought a BOSS RE-20 Space Echo double pedal. It's very good at what it does – it sounds good and makes some weird noises, which is fun. I haven't had it on the 'board for a while, though; I switched to the BOSS Waza Craft DM-2w Delay, which is incredible. The DM-2w is a top-end BOSS pedal.

"Everyone says the same things about BOSS pedals: they're reliable, relatively inexpensive and built like tanks. But I think people don't talk enough about how fun they are. I mean, it's amazing how many weird sounds you can get out of the DM-2w. I like to turn the Intensity up so it's screaming, then pull the Repeat Rate down to get subby drops. Stuff like that makes it fun, but you can also get a really cool post-punk slap out of it, and just the most amazing '80s-sounding delays. The new RE-202 Space Echo is a lot of fun, too. It's a massive upgrade to the RE-20. I have an original Roland RE-201 [Space Echo], but the RE-202 does the same cool things you can do with real tape.

"In terms of BOSS pedals on my 'board right now, I have the half-size [TU-3S Chromatic] Tuner, the Waza Craft DM-2w Delay, and the [PS-6] Harmonist. I use the Harmonist mostly for rises – like a ramp up in pitch. It's the primary sound for my guitar part in *When The Lights Come On* from the album *Crawler*. And there's a section in *Never Fight A Man With A Perm* [from *Joy As An Act Of Resistance*] where I use the Harmonist. I like it for noise.

"Looping is something I'm really interested in at the moment, and I recently got the RC-5 Loop Station. It's incredible – really intuitive. I wanted it mainly for writing to begin with, but I found it's cool to loop a part and then play with the 'board. I also got the SY-1 [Synthesizer] for making pad sounds. But then I discovered the SY-200 Synthesizer, which is insane!"

BOSS

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